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ABSTRACT

This report summarizes the major findings, conclusions, and recommendations of the 1980-81 British Columbia Kindergarten Needs Assessment. This assessment was designed to elicit a broad base of information, both fact and opinion, from the professional literature, from review panels held across the province, and from a survey of groups most closely concerned with kindergarten children. The central purpose of the assessment was to make information available to the Ministry of Education for its curriculum committee, charged with reviewing current kindergarten programs. Results are discussed in terms of the background of the kindergarten, early childhood education models used, characteristics of the kindergarten teacher, parents' role in kindergarten, the relationship of kindergarten to preschool and first grade, admission policies, the kindergarten physical environment and facilities, kindergarten organization, the effectiveness of kindergarten curriculum guides, screening methods, and the provisions necessary for special kindergarten children. Recommendations for improvements in the above areas are made and suggestions for further research in the area of kindergarten needs assessment are briefly provided. (MP)

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BRITISH COLUMBIA
KINDERGARTEN NEEDS ASSESSMENT
1980

Summary Report

PS 013 953

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A REPORT TO
THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
PROVINCE OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

BRITISH COLUMBIA

KINDERGARTEN NEEDS ASSESSMENT

SUMMARY REPORT

Submitted to the

Learning Assessment Branch

Ministry of Education

Province of British Columbia

by

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PREFACE

This report summarizes the major findings, conclusions, and recommendations of the 1980 British Columbia Kindergarten Needs Assessment. A complete presentation and discussion of the assessment is contained in the General Report which is available upon request from the Learning Assessment Branch, Ministry of Education.

The Contract Team wishes to thank the many people whose co-operation made this assessment possible. We wish to thank the teachers, administrators, and parents who gave their time to complete the questionnaires and especially those who wrote comments.

We would like to recognize the help and suggestions given by the Review Panels and the Advisory Committee.

We appreciate the help of Mary Cooper of B.C. Research and Nancy Greer and Robert Wilson of the Learning Assessment Branch. Our special thanks to Iris McIntyre of the Learning Assessment Branch who served as consultant to this assessment.

And finally, our thanks to our students, colleagues, families, and friends for their support and understanding.

The 1980 Kindergarten Needs Assessment

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H I G H L I G H T S

The 1980 Kindergarten Needs Assessment was the first assessment of its kind conducted in B. C. Unlike the other assessments of major curriculum areas which gather information on student performance in selected skills, this assessment was designed to elicit a broad base of information, both fact and opinion, from the professional literature, from review panels held across the province, and from a survey of groups most closely concerned with Kindergarten children. The central purpose of the assessment was to make that information available to the Ministry of Education for its curriculum committee charged with reviewing the current Kindergarten program. In this respect, the assessment did follow the fundamental principle underlying all assessments, namely that decisions affecting education are best made when based on accurate and current information. An advisory committee comprised of teachers, administrators, and a trustee provided input at key stages of the assessment.

The survey portion of the Kindergarten Needs Assessment was conducted in September 1980. The method used was questionnaires directed at specific groups: All Kindergarten teachers in the province, samples of school administrators and teachers in schools enrolling Kindergarten classes, and samples of parents of Kindergarten and Grade 1 students. In addition, each school district office received a copy which it assigned to the district administrator most closely connected with Kindergarten. Because of the wide-spread increase of nursery schools and daycare centres in recent years, questionnaires were also sent to a sample of parents of Preschool children and to the Supervisors of each licensed Preschool centre in the province.

Features of the current program as described by Kindergarten Teachers

The picture of the Kindergarten classroom that emerged depicts a very cooperative, non-competitive situation with more emphasis on developing children's self concepts than on developing their academic skills. Children develop positive feelings about themselves by working with other children in a spirit of cooperation and by discovering that the learning process is self-rewarding. Teachers would like to see the current integrated, activity-centred Kindergarten program retained.

It was possible to distinguish three broad clusters of program models currently in use in B. C. schools. The model used most widely lies mid-way between academic program-centred and child-centred approaches. Its distinguishing features are: moderate emphasis on academics, moderate teacher control of the pace of instruction, low emphasis on materials found in the environment, and low child control over the nature of activities.

Comparison of actual and ideal programs

All parent and educator groups surveyed were asked to indicate how they would like to see an ideal Kindergarten program structured. There was considerable agreement among all the groups in rating highly statements such as: "The learning process should be self-rewarding" and "The children's self-concepts would be developed through success in working with other children." Although there were few marked differences among the surveyed groups some contrasts did emerge. For example, in the future,

Teacher groups would like to see more individualization of program goals, more teacher-child cooperation in planning programs, and less time following set sequences of instruction, or using materials and engaging in activities aimed toward academic achievement.

Administrator groups agreed with teachers that less time should be spent using materials and engaging in activities aimed toward academic achievement. They also felt that the teachers should have more control over the nature of the activities than they perceive exists at present.

Parent groups would also like to see more emphasis on developing their child's self-concept. They are more likely than other groups to see this occurring through an emphasis on academic skills.

Recommendations for the Curriculum Committee included:

* develop a curriculum guide that provides "specific guidance without prescription"

* supplement the guide with resource information that would include suggestions for possible units and activities, suggested formats for evaluation, and a list of suggested materials, supplies and equipment for Kindergarten to aid teachers and administrators in implementing the Kindergarten curriculum

* develop a specific statement of the goals and purposes of Kindergarten

* prepare a comprehensive statement on reading/reading readiness that defines these terms, and indicates their appropriateness for Kindergarten

* develop a statement on play and its role in Kindergarten, including the different types and purposes of play and its importance as a learning method for young children

* examine the Grade 1 curriculum and consider its relationship to the Kindergarten curriculum in order to develop one for Kindergarten that assures continuity for the children from one level to another

* consider the Preschool experience of many children prior to beginning Kindergarten in further developing a Kindergarten curriculum that is flexible enough to accommodate these children's needs throughout the year.

Although matters pertaining to curriculum formed the major part of this assessment, information was gathered on a number of other topics that could have a bearing on future decisions regarding Kindergarten.

Administrative Concerns

* The Ministry was asked to examine existing policies regarding admission procedures, twice-a-year-entry and compulsory attendance and make changes where needed. In addition, it was recommended that the Ministry review current funding policy for Kindergarten programs, transportation, and classroom size.

* School District personnel were asked to examine their administrative practices dealing with transition classes between Kindergarten and Grade 1 alternating morning and afternoon classes, screening procedures and support services available for special needs children in the Kindergarten.

In-service

* Emerging from the assessment were two distinct areas of need for in-service. The first arises out of recommendations from teachers that they need training in the areas of special needs children and evaluation.

* A recommendation in the report advocates the planning of Kindergarten in-service opportunities around these and other identified needs.

* The universities of the province are asked to ensure that the educational opportunities exist for Kindergarten teachers in all parts of the province.

* A second area of need centred on the relationships between Preschool and Kindergarten and between Kindergarten and Grade 1. Districts were encouraged to expand the existing opportunities for communication between Kindergarten and Grade 1 teachers to include activities such as observations of each others' classes and joint in-service on topics of common concern.

* In addition, it was suggested that a variety of communication activities begin or expand between Kindergarten and Preschool teachers.

Communication between home and school

* All groups agreed on the importance of parent-teacher contact and on the unique position of the Kindergarten teacher in establishing this relationship. Parents expressed their willingness to participate in even wider opportunities for home-school interaction.

* It was recommended, therefore, that school personnel examine and implement a variety of ways that parent-teacher contact and parent participation can be established.

* Further, all groups agreed that it is desirable for each school to plan and implement an educational program for parents of Preschool and Kindergarten children to explain and discuss the Kindergarten program.

* It was recommended that school districts fund and support such educational programs.

* Overwhelming support by all groups for parenting/parent education courses was also evident.

The General Report provides a complete description of the assessment and all results, conclusions and recommendations. The Summary Report which follows is a précis of the General Report.

CHAPTER 1

OVERVIEW OF THE KINDERGARTEN NEEDS ASSESSMENT

1.1 What were the General Purposes of the Assessment?

The 1980 Kindergarten Needs Assessment was the first one conducted province-wide in Kindergartens in British Columbia. Since the last revision of the Kindergarten curriculum in 1973, there has been considerable growth in the field of Early Childhood Education and important changes in the social context in which Kindergarten education occurs. The commitment of the Ministry of Education to a review of its programs offered the opportunity to systematically investigate the context and the program of Kindergartens. Thus a review of the Kindergarten curriculum could proceed on a firm grounding of relevant, timely information.

1.2 What were the Specific Areas of Investigation of the Assessment?

To help illuminate both the context and the programs, a Contract Team, comprised of educators from the University of Victoria and a practising Kindergarten teacher, was asked to develop the necessary procedures. The broad topics to be investigated were the present Kindergarten program in British Columbia and the opinions of informed and interested persons regarding the future Kindergarten program. Of particular interest was the identification of the curriculum model(s) currently in use in Kindergarten as well as the curriculum model(s) preferred for the future.

1.3 What Procedures Were Used?

To accomplish these goals, a review of research was conducted and a paper produced on models currently used in Kindergarten programs. Regional meetings were conducted around the province with Early Childhood educators and parents focussing on potential areas of investigation. Because of time and budget limitations, a questionnaire survey approach was implemented to elicit information from a variety of groups about current status and potential needs.

Separate forms of the questionnaire were prepared and distributed to the following groups:

- All Kindergarten teachers in the province
- A sample of Grade 1 teachers and administrators in schools enrolling Kindergarten classes

- The administrator each school district identified as most responsible for Kindergarten district-wide
- Supervisors of all registered Preschool centres
- A sample of parents of children at each of three levels - Preschool, Kindergarten, and Grade 1.

Four review panels were held in different locations in the province to discuss potential questionnaire items (see Appendix). The review panels were composed of persons representative of each of the groups to be surveyed. Final forms of each of the questions thus reflect input from these panels. Return rates for each of the final questionnaire forms are shown in Table 1.1

TABLE 1.1

RETURN RATE BY GROUP SURVEYED

Group	Number Returned	Return Rate
Teachers		
Kindergarten Teachers	1025	80%
Grade 1 Teachers	526	72%
Preschool Teachers	357	44%
Administrators		
Principals of Elementary schools which enrolled Kindergarten Children	426	84%
School District Primary Supervisors, or the person at the district level most familiar with Kindergartens	58	77%
Parents		
Kindergarten Children's Parents	492	48%
Grade 1 Children's Parents	428	41%
Preschool Children's Parents	361	31%

For a complete description of the sample, return rates, and data analyses, see Chapter 1 of the General Report.

CHAPTER 2

WHAT IS THE BACKGROUND OF KINDERGARTEN IN BRITISH COLUMBIA?

2.1 How did Kindergartens in the Public School System Develop?

The establishment of Kindergartens in the public schools of British Columbia began in 1922 when the Public Schools Act empowered school boards to "establish and maintain Kindergarten classes for children between four and six years of age in all cases where instruction in Kindergarten work is considered desirable by the Board." The school boards in British Columbia did not choose to establish Kindergartens at this time, and until 1944 the Kindergartens were private Kindergartens.

In the early 1940's, there was increasing interest among social agencies, parents, and primary teachers in pre-primary education due in part to the increased need for women in the labour force during World War II. In February 1944, the government announced financial assistance for the establishment of Kindergarten classes in the public schools.

In 1946, basic financial grants for Kindergarten teachers were established on the same basis as for other elementary school teachers. The grant "for pupils in average daily attendance" was extended to Kindergartens in 1948. As a result of these two types of grants more Kindergartens were established.

In the Public Schools Act of 1958, the minimum age for admittance into Kindergarten in the public schools was changed from 4 years of age to "one year younger than the age required for admission to Grade 1." The section of the Public Schools Act dealing with the establishment of Kindergartens by school boards was amended in 1958 to read that the school board of any school district could establish and maintain Kindergartens if the Superintendent of Education approved. Thus the power of the School Boards to establish Kindergartens became limited. This limitation was removed in 1962 and as a result of increased demand, Kindergarten enrolment doubled almost immediately.

In the 1960's and 70's, an increasing number of districts provided Kindergartens and enrolled increasing numbers of children. In April 1973, provision for Kindergartens in each school district in British Columbia was made mandatory beginning with the 1974-75 school year. The enrolment of children in Kindergarten peaked in 1975 then declined as a reflection of the declining birth rate.

2.2 How Many Children are Attending Kindergarten Today?

In September 1979, there were 34,298 children enrolled in public school Kindergartens in British Columbia. This is 95% of the total enrolment in all Kindergartens in British Columbia. A breakdown of Kindergarten enrolment by type of school is presented in Table 2.1

TABLE 2.1

KINDERGARTEN ENROLMENT IN BRITISH COLUMBIA
(1979-1980)

Type of School	Enrolment in Kindergarten	Percentage of Total Kindergarten Enrolment
Public	34,298	94.8
Private (Funded)	1,215	3.4
Band operated	257	.7
Private (non-funded)	223	.6
Correspondence	123 (In-Province =92) (Out-of-Province=31)	.3
Federally operated	68	.2
TOTAL	36,184	

In September 1979, there were 36,745 children in B.C. of Kindergarten age (i.e., 4.8 to 5.8). Therefore, approximately 98.5% of the Kindergarten-aged children in B.C. attended some type of Kindergarten. This figure agrees with information gathered by the questionnaires: 98.5% of the responding Grade 1 parents (n=405) indicated that their child had attended Kindergarten in 1979-80. Of these children, 98.5% attended a public school Kindergarten and 1.5% attended a private Kindergarten.

Grade 1 teachers were asked what percentage of their current Grade 1 class did not attend Kindergarten. The responding teachers (n=455) indicated most frequently that all the children had attended Kindergarten.

Preschool parents were asked if they planned to enrol their Preschool child in Kindergarten when he/she is five years of age. Of the responding parents (n=351), 99% said

they were. These parents (n=349) indicated that 94% would enrol their child in a public school Kindergarten, 5% in a private Kindergarten, and 1% indicated other alternatives (e.g., travel, moving overseas, etc.).

Although compulsory school age in B.C. is seven years, nearly all eligible aged children are currently attending Kindergarten.

2.3 What is Known About the Kindergarten Child in B.C.?

Observation of and assessment of Kindergarten children were not part of this survey. If a "true", comprehensive developmental profile of the Kindergarten-aged child in B.C. were to be obtained, it would require the detailed observation of thousands of children throughout the province. Clearly, this was beyond the scope and terms of reference of this survey.

From the information gathered as a result of this survey, one could infer the following is a composite for the Kindergarten child in B.C.:

- -Has been to preschool for 2 years; most likely in a cooperative nursery school situation (see Chapter 6)
- -Speaks English as a first language
- -Attends a half-day Kindergarten session for two and one-half hours (see Chapter 9)
- -Is one of 20 children in the Kindergarten class that does not contain children from another grade level (see Chapter 9)
- -Is one of 36,745 Kindergarten aged children in B.C. (see Chapter 2)
- -Has been evaluated by the Kindergarten teacher and perhaps a Learning Assistance teacher to determine any special needs (see Chapter 12)
- -Is not a special needs child (see Chapter 13)
- -Does not use school district provided transportation (see Chapter 9)
- -Began Kindergarten with shortened sessions in September (see Chapter 9) and
- -Participates in a program which favours a Cognitive-Discovery or Discovery Model approach (see Chapter 3).

2.4 How Many Children Will be Attending Kindergarten in the Future?

Based on the B.C. Public School Systems September Enrolment Projects, an increase of 11% between 1979/80 enrolment and 1990 enrolment is projected. However, if the current trend of movement into British Columbia from other parts of Canada and other countries continues, the project increase could be much higher. Therefore, the projection of 11% is likely to be a conservative estimate.

CHAPTER 3

WHAT EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION MODELS ARE USED IN B.C.?

3.1 What Is the Background of Current Early Childhood Education Programs?

The 1960's and 70's saw an increase in the emphasis placed on Early Childhood Education. The roots of this increased interest were observed in theoretical writings, research, social trends, societal pressures, governmental interests and other forces.

The education community's search for maximum use of intellectual resources in the post-Sputnik years combined with the social philosophy of the sixties resulted in more research and writing on the implications of early education for children. At that time, some of the most influential writers in this area were J. McVicker Hunt Benjamin Bloom, Jean Piaget, and Jerome Bruner.

Societal and economic trends of this period led to more women in the labour force and more children placed in child care. One result of this has been an increase of public awareness of education in the early years.

In the 1960's, education, and especially early education, came to be seen as an antidote to cultural deprivation and poverty. In the United States, this thinking led to the creation of massive federally funded Early Childhood Education programs such as Head Start and Follow Through. These programs were particularly significant historically in Early Childhood Education because it was the first time a variety of Early Childhood programs had been implemented and evaluated on such a grand scale. Chapter 2 of the General Report includes a brief summary of Project Head Start and the subsequent Project Follow-Through as well as descriptions of model programs illustrating a range of curriculum models in Early Childhood Education.

3.2 What Are the Purposes of Kindergarten?

The eight groups of respondents were asked to rate the purposes of the Kindergarten which ranged from an emphasis on the affective to an emphasis on academic concerns.

The most important purposes selected by all respondents were affective in nature while those emphasizing the preparation for academic subjects were judged to be of least importance. When the responses of the parents and the educators were examined separately, parents put less emphasis

on the affective purposes than on academic ones. The reverse was true for the teachers and administrators.

3.3 How Effective Is Kindergarten in Achieving These Purposes?

The Grade 1 teachers and parents, as well as the administrators rated the Kindergarten as most effective in meeting the stated purposes of socialization, easing the transition from home to school, and the development of positive self-concepts. All groups rated the Kindergarten as relatively least effective in enabling the child to become self-directive.

3.4 What Are Some of the Current Models in Early Childhood Education?

In this survey, a continuum with three points representing three curriculum models has been constructed as a classification system for Early Childhood Education models. These models were placed on this continuum in order to emphasize the fact that although these models are distinct, overlap can exist.

The range of models in Early Childhood Education chosen for this review spans a wide continuum from informal to formal approaches. This informal-formal continuum refers to the degree of structure or directiveness in daily activities. An informal model is oriented toward socio-emotional development where the emphasis is on a highly flexible program with provisions for children planning much of their own learning. A formal model is oriented toward definite cognitive development where the approach is rather highly structured and is teacher-planned and directed.

This continuum of Early Childhood Education models can be divided into three categories:

1. Academic/Preacademic Model
2. Cognitive Discovery Model
3. Discovery Model

An Academic/Preacademic model is said to "foster development of preacademic skills and place a heavy emphasis of systematic reinforcement and drills on individualized programmed instruction" (Beller, 1973, p.580). An example of the Academic/Preacademic model is Engelmann-Becker/Distar program.

A Cognitive Discovery model is said to "promote the growth of basic cognitive process by helping children develop the appropriate verbal labels and concepts while they engage in sequence exploration" (Beller, 1973, p. 580). Examples of the Cognitive Discovery model include the Cognitively Oriented Curriculum and Responsive Education. These two programs were chosen in order to illustrate the range found in the Cognitive-Discovery model.

A Discovery model is said to "view learning as part of the humanistic growth of the whole child with emphasis on free exploration and self-expression" (Beller, 1973, p. 580). An example of the Discovery model is Education Development Center Open Education.

The above models and the overall theoretical framework are summarized in Figure 3.1.

In addition to these four programs, three other Early Childhood programs have been included because they are relevant to current Kindergarten education in British Columbia which must address the needs of native children, the need to establish appropriate programs for the growing number of children entering the schools for whom English is a second language, and the need to accommodate the popular demand for instruction in the French language in the early years. These programs are discussed in detail in Chapter 2 of the General Report.

3.5 Which Models are Used in Kindergartens in B.C.?

The Contract Team developed a set of 23 statements which were representative of the different models discussed in Chapter 2 of the General Report. The Kindergarten teachers were asked to indicate the extent to which each statement described their present classroom. In addition, Kindergarten teachers, other teachers, administrators, and parents were asked to respond to the set of statements in terms of what they would ideally like to see in Kindergarten.

The responses to the set of 23 statements provided (a) an estimate of the amount of time a particular activity, or form of an activity, occurred in the actual program and (b) an estimate of how frequently it should occur in an ideal Kindergarten program. The seven point rating scale ranged

FIGURE 3.1

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION MODELS

	FORMAL cognitive development emphasis ◄———		———► INFORMAL socio-emotional development emphasis
Curriculum Models	Academic/Preacademic Models	Cognitive-Discovery Models	Discovery Models
Model Programs	Engelmann/Becker/Distar	Cognitively Oriented Curriculum; Responsive Education	EDC Open Education
Characteristics of Model Programs	Immediate feedback Active involvement of children Specific performance criteria Same tasks for all children Emphasis on acquisition of academic skills in reading, language and arithmetics (i.e., basic skills) Prescribed materials for teachers and children structured physical environment Teacher to present curriculum as specified; perform diagnostic operations; reinforce correct responses; and maintain rapid instructional pace Parents reinforce program at home; can work as aides after training	Development of child through active learning (i.e., Piaget and development based) Self-initiated activity by children; direct experience Emphasis on problem-solving ability, thinking and communication skills as well as development of healthy self-concept Series of activities in areas such as problem solving, perception, language, etc. Traditional Kindergarten materials Classroom organized into activity areas Teacher organizes environment; observes children; and uses variety of teaching strategies Parent meetings, home visits, volunteer and trained aides in classroom	Emphasis on "whole child" Learning highly individualized Self-initiated activity Incorporates theories of Froebel, Montessori, Piaget and Bruner Provision of resources and environment for growth in problem solving, ability to express self and to become self-directive No specific curriculum interdisciplinary approach No required materials Use of open-ended materials found in environment encouraged Teacher organizes environment; and guides children rather than instructs Parents as resource people and aides

from "Always" to "Never". A complete description of the procedures, statements, and analyses is given in Chapter 4 of the General Report. This provided a picture of a very cooperative, non-competitive Kindergarten with a relatively low emphasis on academic skills and a relatively high emphasis on developing children's self-concepts.

The role of academic subjects is an issue of some concern to Kindergarten teachers. In identifying characteristics of the actual program, Kindergarten teachers indicated that, approximately two-thirds of the time, materials are specifically chosen to increase the academic skills of the children and activities planned to ensure academic achievement of the children. However, they also indicated that the children are mainly involved in learning basic academic skills only 40% of the time and that children's self-concepts are developed through success in academic skills only 28% of the time. An explanation for these apparently contradictory findings may be that although Kindergarten teachers are aware of the importance of Kindergarten in terms of the future academic achievement of the children, they think that direct instruction in academic skills in the Kindergarten is not appropriate.

This is not to say that the present programs do not have some structure. Although the children are free to choose their own activities 61% of the time and would determine the nature of the activities 52% of the time, the teachers determine the pace of instruction 65% of the time, plan the activities with the children 53% of the time, provide a set sequence of instruction 73% of the time and direct most of the children toward the same goals 58% of the time. These data indicate that the teachers are structuring and controlling much of the Kindergarten educational environment.

The materials provided for the Kindergarten child were seen as being an important factor in the Kindergarten program. The Kindergarten teachers reported that the children

are learning through the use of manipulative materials 75% of the time with an emphasis on materials found in the environment 60% of the time. The program content is determined by the interest the children take in the materials 67% of the time and materials which increase the academic skills are chosen 64% of the time.

In summary, if one were to place the typical Kindergarten program in B.C. on the continuum of models described in Figure 3.1, based on the responses of Kindergarten teachers, the program would be placed between the Cognitive-Discovery Models and the Discovery Model.

3.6 What Differences Exist Between the Kindergarten Teachers' Actual Program and Their Ideal Program?

The difference in mean response for the Kindergarten teachers between each statement describing the actual program and its counterpart for the ideal program was tested to determine where there was statistically significant difference. These results indicate that the Kindergarten teachers would like to see the largest increases in the amount of time in which cooperative planning between teachers and children occurs, and in the amount of time allotted to individualized programs. They would like to see significant decreases in the perceived academic nature of the program, and in the amount of time they follow a fixed sequence of instruction. In terms of the different Kindergarten program models outlined in Figure 3.1, the teachers are suggesting a shift toward the Discovery Model as being ideal. A full description of these differences and those of the other groups is provided in Figure 3.2.

3.7 What Differences Exist Between the Actual Kindergarten and the Ideal Program as Seen by Other Respondents?

There was considerable uniformity of response to the "Ideal Program" question within each of the teacher groups, administrator group and parent group.

3.7.1 Teachers' Groups

All three teachers' groups indicated that less time should be spent using materials and activities which are aimed toward academic achievement. The Preschool and

FIGURE 3.2

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE ACTUAL PROGRAM AND THE IDEAL PROGRAM BY ALL RESPONDENT GROUPS

STATEMENT	ACTUAL*	IDEAL							
		Teachers			Administrators		Parents		
	Kgn Tchrs.	Kgn	Gr.1	Presch.	School	District	Kgn	Gr.1	Presch.
1. Children would be free to choose their own activities.	61%		↓	↓	↓↓	↓↓	↓↓	↓↓	↓↓
2. A spirit of competition would be encouraged in the classroom.	15%				↑	↑	↑	↑	↑
3. The child would learn mainly through the use of manipulative materials (e.g. puzzles, blocks, games, etc.).	75%			↓	↓		↓↓	↓↓	↓↓
4. The children's positive feelings about themselves would be more important than academic skills.	85%				↓	↓↓	↓	↓↓	↓
5. There would be an emphasis on materials found in the environment (e.g. sand, water).	60%	↑		↑					
6. The children's self-concepts would be developed through success in working with other children.	78%						↓		↓
7. Most of the children would be directed toward the same goals.	58%		↑	↓	↓	↓	↑		↓
8. The children would be mainly involved in learning basic academic skills.	40%				↓	↓	↑	↑	↑
9. The content would be determined by the materials the teachers must use.	35%	↓				↓	↑	↑	↑
10. The learning process would be self-rewarding.	83%				↓		↓		
11. Work done would be the result of cooperative planning between the children and the teacher.	53%	↑		↑↑			↑	↑↑	↑

*The estimated ideal time was written within ± 5%.
↑ or ↓ The estimated ideal time was 6-14% more ↑ (or less ↓) than actual.
↑↑ or ↓↓ The estimated time was 15% more ↑↑ (or less ↓↓) than actual.

FIGURE 3.2 (Cont'd)

STATEMENT	ACTUAL*	IDEAL							
		Teachers			Administrators		Parents		
	Kgn Tchrs.	Kgn	Gr.1	Presch.	School	District	Kgn	Gr.1	Presch.
12. There would be a rapid pace of instruction to ensure that children learn all the necessary skills.	24%			↓		↓	↑	↑	
13. The children would determine the nature of the activities.	52%		↓		↓↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
14. Program goals would be determined for each child individually.	57%	↑↑		↑↑		↑		↑	↑
15. The interest of the children in the materials would determine the program content.	67%		↓		↓↓	↓↓	↓	↓	↓
16. There would be use of workbooks and worksheets.	19%			↑			↑↑	↑↑	↑↑
17. Correct response by the children would be immediately re-inforced by material rewards (e.g. candy, raisins, special activities).	7%				↑		↑	↑	
18. Children's self-concept would be developed through success in academic skills.	28%	↑					↑↑	↑↑	↑↑
19. The materials would be specifically chosen to increase the academic skills of the children.	64%	↓↓	↓↓	↓↓	↓↓	↓↓	↓	↓	↓
20. The activities would be planned so as to ensure the academic achievement of the children.	65%	↓↓	↓↓	↓↓	↓↓	↓↓	↓	↓	↓
21. There would be a set sequence of instruction each day.	73%	↓	↓	↓↓	↓↓	↓↓	↓	↓	↓
22. The children would determine the pace of their learning.	68%		↓		↓↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
23. The teacher would determine the pace of instruction.	65%	↓		↓					

Kindergarten teachers would like to see more individualization of program goals. The Preschool teachers would also like to see more teacher-child cooperation in planning programs, and less time following a set sequence of instruction. There was close agreement between Kindergarten teachers and the other two teacher groups, therefore the comments about the Kindergarten teachers are applicable here.

3.7.2 Administrators' Groups

Both School and District Administrators agreed that there should be a smaller proportion of time devoted to academics in the ideal program. However, they also indicated that there should be less time than at present when children were free to choose their own activities, less time when the children would determine program content by their interests in the materials available. Thus, the administrators suggest that the ideal program would involve a transfer of control over the nature of the activities from the child to the teacher relative to what they perceive to be occurring in the present program.

3.7.3 Parents' Groups

The parents would like the ideal Kindergarten program to provide a very large increase over the present program in the use of workbooks and worksheets, and more emphasis on developing a child's self-concept through academic skills. They want less time in which the children would be free to choose their own activities, and less time when the children are learning through the use of manipulative materials. All three parent groups would like to see somewhat less time being spent on academics than is presently done, but not as marked a decrease in time as suggested by the teachers and administrators.

The parents concern over the use of workbooks and worksheets may imply a desire for tangible evidence of a child's progress in Kindergarten, and may indicate a desire by parents to become more familiar with the current Kindergarten program and what their child is doing.

3.8 Which Models Are Used?

Each Kindergarten teacher's response to the 23 statements, describing the actual Kindergarten program, produced a score profile for the teacher on that question. By examining

that profile, a picture of what went on in that teacher's classroom could be obtained. There are many different ways of teaching Kindergarten, therefore, it is important to determine whether there are subgroups of Kindergarten teachers who have similar score profiles but are different with respect to their responses from other subgroups. For example, one subgroup might have a child centred approach while another might have an academic approach.

By means of cluster and discriminant analyses (see General Report, Chapter 4 for the description of procedure used) three groups of Kindergarten teachers (n=200) were identified.

Cluster	Description
Cluster 1 (29% of the total sample)	Relative to the other clusters there is: 1. A higher emphasis on academics 2. Higher teacher control on the pace of instruction 3. A more rapid pace of instruction 4. A greater emphasis on materials found in the environment 5. A more moderate child control over the nature of the activities.
Cluster 2 (42% of the total sample)	Relative to the other clusters there is: 1. A more moderate emphasis on academics 2. More moderate teacher control on the pace of instruction 3. A slower pace of instruction 4. A lower emphasis on materials found in the environment 5. Lower child control over the nature of activities.
Cluster 3 (29% of the total sample)	Relative to the other clusters there is: 1. A lower emphasis on academics 2. Lower teacher control on the pace of instruction 3. A more moderate pace of instruction 4. A more moderate to high emphasis on materials found in the environment 5. Higher child control on the nature of the activities.

The above descriptions provide three pictures of different Kindergartens in the province. The Cluster 1 Kindergarten has a relatively higher emphasis on academics with a more rapid pace of instruction than in other Kindergartens. In addition, the teacher controls the pace of instruction. In contrast, the Cluster 3 Kindergarten has a lower emphasis on academics, a more moderate pace of instruction, and lower control by the teacher on the pace of instruction than in other Kindergartens. Cluster 2 is between those two clusters in terms of academics and control, but lower in terms of pace of instruction and child control over the nature of activities.

Further analysis revealed that a greater number of teachers in Cluster 1 had formal reading readiness programs as compared to the other two clusters. There were no differences among the clusters on rural or urban location, total years of teaching experience, years teaching Kindergarten or Teacher Qualification Service category.

CHAPTER 4

WHO IS THE KINDERGARTEN TEACHER?

4.1 Where did B.C. Kindergarten Teachers Get Their Training and Experience?

The majority of Kindergarten teachers in British Columbia have received their initial training (75%) at provincial institutions and have returned there for additional training (58%). A small percentage (16%) have had training in other Canadian institutions. Less than fifteen percent have been trained outside Canada.

Thirty-two percent have three years of training; fifty-nine percent have four or more years. This represents little change in the level of certification of Kindergarten teachers since the 1975 survey and parallels the information from Form J for 1979. The difference between the years of training for rural and urban teachers is significant with urban teachers having more training.

With 1003 Kindergarten teachers responding, half of the teachers had taught for 9 years or less. Two percent of the teachers have had no teaching experience. Eighty-three percent of the 992 teachers responding taught Kindergarten in 1979.

Fifty-four percent of the Kindergarten teachers have between 1 and 5 years experience at the Kindergarten level. The majority of Kindergarten teachers have had experience teaching at the primary level.

4.2 What Did Other Surveys Conclude About B. C. Teachers?

In 1975, Flemming and Kratzmann investigated the state of pre-primary education in western Canada. They concluded that professional educators, politicians and laymen were becoming increasingly aware that planned educational environments were crucial to the optimal development of children under six years of age and also aware of of the significance of entrusting young children to "highly-qualified instructional personnel" (p.24)

Two recommendations in Language B.C. (1976) and in Orientations and Transitions: A Survey of Kindergarten and Primary Programs in the Greater Victoria (School District #61) (Mayfield, 1980) were:

1. Teachers assigned to Kindergarten should have appropriate Early Childhood Education training and/or experience; and,
2. Suitable in-service and professional development activities, addressed specifically to the needs of Kindergarten teachers, be planned and implemented.

4.3 What Should Be the Pre-Service Training of Kindergarten Teachers in B.C.?

The following were identified as a "Strong need" or "Definite requirement" in their pre-service training by almost all Kindergarten teachers:

-Child Development
-Language Development
-Kindergarten Methods
-Kindergarten Materials
-Music
-Physical Education
-Evaluation.

Next in importance for the respondents were:

-Special Needs Children: Identification
-Children's Literature
-Art Education
-Curriculum Development.

Then, the following were seen to be a requisite part of pre-service training by approximately three-quarters of the responding Kindergarten teachers:

-Mathematics Methods
-Special Needs Children: Instruction
-Science and Social Studies Methods.

Reading Methods were endorsed by over one-half, while the same number thought the History of Early Childhood Education was "Not a need" or only a "Slight need".

Administrators agreed with the Kindergarten teachers about the importance of Child Development, Language Development, Kindergarten Methods and Materials. However, they rated Special Needs Children: Identification among the top-priority areas. Curriculum Development, Mathematics Methods, Reading Methods and Social Studies Methods were perceived by the administrators to be of less importance than by Kindergarten teachers. History of Early Childhood Education was uniformly given a low priority by all respondents.

4.4 How Adequate was Kindergarten Teachers' Pre-service Training?

Forty-two percent of the responding Kindergarten teachers reported that they had had adequate preparation while forty percent felt that they had been very well or exceptionally well prepared by their pre-service training. Examination of the responses from rural and urban teachers showed that urban teachers felt better prepared than did rural teachers. While this situation implies that the vast majority (82%) of Kindergarten teachers felt their pre-service training was adequate, it should not go unnoticed that 18% reported it to be inadequate.

4.5 In What Areas Would Kindergarten Teachers Like Additional Training?

The Kindergarten teachers were asked in which areas they would like to have additional training. Except in the identification and instruction of special needs children, the majority of Kindergarten teachers appear to be reasonably confident about their competencies. This reflects the high percentage of Kindergarten teachers who expressed satisfaction with their pre-service training. It might be speculated that the current trend toward mainstreaming and the early identification of "at risk" Preschool children accounts for the interest in special needs and, to a lesser degree, in evaluation. Their written comments indicate that additional training through in-service would be helpful.

4.6 What Inservice is Available and What is Needed?

Less than half the responding teachers had attended workshops relevant to Kindergarten. Approximately thirty-eight percent reported that some professional days had been devoted to Kindergarten concerns. Eighty percent of the teachers reported that there had been no discretionary days devoted to Kindergarten.

The majority of Kindergarten teachers and District administrators agreed on the need for more inservice education. Half the School administrators expressed a need for more Kindergarten inservice opportunities. A greater proportion of rural administrators than urban administrators favoured inservice. Eighteen percent of the Kindergarten teachers indicated that they didn't know if more inservice was needed. Comments from Kindergarten teachers and administrators revealed their concerns that inservice suitable for Kindergarten teachers be provided and that Kindergarten teachers attend these sessions.

4.7 What Should be a Prerequisite for Assignment to Kindergarten?

There was clear agreement among Kindergarten teachers, Preschool teachers, School and District administrators that Early Childhood Education training is the top-priority requisite. Administrators perceived recent inservice in Kindergarten to be an important qualification.

The large majority of Preschool teachers and District administrators indicated that Early Childhood experience is a strong need or a definite requirement, while school personnel did not rate it as highly.

Administrators were in agreement that primary education training is a strong need. Kindergarten teachers were about evenly divided on this question. This response from Kindergarten teachers was somewhat surprising as the majority of them have taught in the primary grades. Preschool teachers rejected primary training with sixty-one percent rating it as not a need or only a slight need.

Teaching experience in Grade 1 was not thought to be needed to any great extent, although several Grade 1 teachers volunteered the opinion that this experience makes Kindergarten teachers aware of the tasks which face the Grade 1 child.

Written comments from all groups of respondents indicated that personal qualities of a teacher such as openness, enthusiasm, love of children are vital to the Kindergarten program and should be included in the prerequisites for assignment to a Kindergarten class.

When the parents of Kindergarten and Grade 1 were asked if they thought that teachers should have special training in teaching Kindergarten and be required to have experience with young children before being assigned to a Kindergarten class they showed a high degree of agreement with Kindergarten teachers and Administrators about the desirability of a special training and experience. Only a small percentage indicated that these two qualifications were unnecessary.

4.8 To What Professional Organizations Do Kindergarten Teachers Belong?

Two-fifths of the responding Kindergarten teachers reported belonging to a local primary teachers' association; a majority belonged to a local Kindergarten teachers' association. Slightly less than half reported belonging to the Primary Teachers' Association of the B.C.T.F.

It is evident that Kindergarten teachers belonged to very few of the available professional organizations. Ten percent of the Kindergarten teachers did not belong to any Early Childhood organizations. This finding could be partially due to the fact that there are relatively few opportunities in many parts of the Province to belong to organizations devoted to Kindergarten concerns. It may be that an effort should be made to establish branches of Early Childhood Education organizations in more areas of the province to provide a medium for teachers to share professional ideas and to consider solutions for common problems. This would also augment the provision of in-service activities and reduce the sense of isolation many Kindergarten teachers tend to experience. A very small proportion of the teachers belonged to national or international Early Childhood Education groups.

A Specialist's certificate in Early Childhood Education did not rate very highly as a need among Kindergarten teachers. Approximately half of the District administrators and Preschool teachers indicated that a Specialist's certificate is a strong need or a definite requirement, while half of the School administrators were of the same opinion.

4.9 What Professional Journals Do Kindergarten Teachers Read?

The Kindergarten teachers were asked to indicate which professional journals they had access to and those that they read on a regular basis. The most available journals are Teacher, B.C. Teacher and Prime Areas. The latter two are read most regularly. The Instructor is read by forty-one percent of those who have access to it. The same number (twenty-four percent) have access to Learning, but fewer teachers read it regularly. The rest of the journals are not very accessible nor read to any extent when they are. This lack of accessibility would appear to be a reflection of the low percentage of membership in the professional organizations which publish these journals.

In summary, if there were such a person as the "typical" Kindergarten teacher in B. C., that person would

- be female
- have received three or more years of training at a British Columbia institution, and perceived this training to be more than adequate,
- have had little in the way of inservice opportunities specifically related to Kindergarten
- wants additional training in the identification and instruction of special-needs children.

CHAPTER 5

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF PARENTS IN THE KINDERGARTEN?

5.1 Why Was Parent Involvement Investigated?

The importance of parent involvement in the child's education has been researched and is generally recognized to be of enduring importance (Hendrick, 1980). In one review of the research (Schaefer, 1971), it was reported that parent involvement was a more imporant variable in children's achievement than the quality of the school.

In the Resource Book for Kindergartens (1973), it is stated that education should be a "Continuing parent-teacher partnership . . . [and that] getting parents involved in the school and its activities can be richly rewarding for everyone concerned" (p.92). Parents wish to be sufficiently well-informed about what their children are doing in school, how well they are progressing, and what can be done at home to help (Gallup, 1980; Mayfield, 1980).

5.2 What Types of Contact Did Parents Have with The School?

Kindergarten teachers reported that about 92% of the parents came to conferences, between 30% and 40% of the parents assisted and/or observed and 31% never or almost never took part in any Kindergarten activities. Although teachers reported contact with nearly all parents through parent-teacher conferences, a third of the parents never or almost never took part in any other Kindergarten activities.

5.3 How Frequently were Parents Involved in Kindergarten?

Kindergarten teachers estimates of the frequency of parent involvement are presented in Table 5.1.

The activities in which parents assisted most frequently (i.e., monthly or more often) were helping children in small group work, assisting in classroom learning centres, helping children in one-to-one situations, and assisting on field trips. Parents assisted least frequently in performing clerical work.

TABLE 5.1

ESTIMATES OF FREQUENCY OF ASSISTANCE FOR PREVIOUS YEAR BY KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS*
(Entries are percentages)

How frequently, ON THE AVERAGE, did any parents or other adult family members give each of the following types of assistance in your classroom LAST YEAR?

Types of Assistance	Frequency				
	Never	1-4 times a year	Monthly	Weekly	Daily
Helping children in small groups	24	22	10	31	14
Helping children in one-to-one situations	40	17	7	22	14
Acting as resource person	33	48	14	4	1
Assisting in classroom learning centres	39	15	8	24	14
Reading to children	55	17	7	16	5
Recording children's stories	63	11	6	15	7
Helping prepare materials for class activities	43	21	9	19	9
Doing clerical work	81	7	4	7	2
Assistance on field trips	4	53	39	4	0

*n = 813 - 840 depending on item

Approximately half the parents reported they would be willing to assist on at least a monthly basis with small group work, one-to-one situations, reading to the children, and preparing materials for class activities. Overall, parents seemed most unwilling to perform clerical work and most willing to assist on field trips.

Of the Grade 1 parents who estimated the frequency of their assistance in last year's Kindergarten classroom, very few provided monthly, weekly or daily assistance. After helping with field trips, the tasks of helping children in small groups and helping prepare materials for class activities were the most common types of assistance given.

5.4 How Frequent Are Teacher-Parent Contacts

Only six percent of the Kindergarten parents reported never wanting scheduled conferences, classroom visits, report cards, and bulletins. They most frequently (i.e., monthly or more often) would like bulletins/ announcements and newsletters. These types of contact were also mentioned by the teachers and the previous year's Kindergarten parents as those which were used most frequently.

The type of contact which occurred the least in the past year as reported by both Kindergarten teachers and Grade 1 parents was the home visit.

5.5 What Are the Preferred Methods of Contact?

Scheduled conferences and classroom visits for planned observation were the preferred methods by Kindergarten teachers and Kindergarten and Grade 1 parents. The home visit method of contact was not popular with Kindergarten and Grade 1 parents.

5.6 What Methods of Reporting Should Be Used in the Kindergarten?

Kindergarten teachers, School and District administrators were strongly opposed to letter grades on report cards and to letter grades on permanent records. They strongly agreed that conferences with parents were the preferred method of reporting. Overall, each of the respondent groups was divided regarding their opinion on using report cards to parents. About half agreed that report cards were the preferred method, and about half disagreed.

5.7 What are the Obstacles to Parent Involvement?

The group that was most aware of existing obstacles to parent participation was the Kindergarten teachers. The majority of School (57%) and District (54%) administrators however, indicated that there were no obstacles to parent participation. Parents were divided in opinion as to the existence of obstacles. A majority of teachers and administrators indicated parents who work as the most frequent obstacle; the majority of parents indicated other children needing care at home.

5.8 What Information about Schools is Provided to Parents?

In order to determine if parents were informed about the Kindergarten program prior to or during the beginning stages of the program, the Kindergarten teachers were asked to indicate whether outlines were provided to parents. Seventeen percent responded negatively. For the teachers who did provide outlines, 20% of these outlines were presented orally, 19% in written form and 61% both in oral and written form. Of the teachers who provided outlines of some sort, 80% were involved in compiling the outline. Written comments of the parents indicated that they would appreciate receiving such information.

More than three-quarters of the responding Kindergarten (81%) and Preschool (89%) teachers, School (85%) and

District (95%) administrators, Kindergarten (77%), Grade 1 (80%) and Preschool (87%) parents agreed that each school should plan and implement an educational program for parents of Preschool and Kindergarten children to explain the Kindergarten program.

5.9 Does School Staff Help Prepare Children for Kindergarten?

A third of the Kindergarten parents and 45% of the Grade 1 parents indicated that the school staff had not helped them prepare their children for Kindergarten. Of these parents, 38% and 34% respectively, indicated that the school staff could have helped in some way to prepare their children for Kindergarten. This suggests that there may be an area of need to be addressed at the school and district levels.

5.10 What is the Role of the Kindergarten Teacher in Establishing Parent-Teacher Relationships?

There was almost unanimous agreement among Kindergarten and Preschool teachers, School and District administrators and Kindergarten Grade 1 and Preschool parents with the statement from the Resource Book for Kindergartens (1973) that the Kindergarten teachers is in a unique position to establish early and continuing parent-teacher relationships. Such high degree of agreement puts the responsibility on the Kindergarten teacher to be a positive, first contact between parent-child and school. However, the support of administrators, primary and intermediate teachers is clearly required to promote and sustain such relationships.

5.11 Should Parenting Courses Be Made Available?

When asked if courses on parenting/parent education should be made available to parents in this district, there was agreement among Kindergarten (85%), Grade 1 (81%) and Preschool (99%), teachers, school(87%) and District (70%) administrators, Kindergarten (85%), Grade 1 (83%) and Preschool (91%) parents that this was desirable. Given this high proportion of agreement, this may be an area where school districts might consider sponsoring programs that would address this perceived need (if they do not already do so).

CHAPTER 6

WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP OF KINDERGARTEN TO PRESCHOOL?

6.1 What are the Current Trends in Preschool in Canada?

One of the most significant trends in the 1970's with educational implications was the increased number of children enrolled in Preschool programs (e.g., day care, nursery school, play group). This increase has been due in large part to the need of many mothers of young children to work outside the home. In fact, there is "overwhelming evidence . . . that mothers enter the work force either as the sole provider for their families or because they found one salary insufficient to meet the rising cost of living" (National Day Care Information Centre, 1978, p.1). Preschool, and especially day care, is no longer just a luxury of the upper middle class who use the programs to provide extra socialization experiences for their children but a necessity for thousands of parents and children. In "March 1979, there were an estimated 504,000 children (in Canada) aged 2 to 6 of working mothers. The data indicates that 77,929 or 15.46% of children aged 2 to 6 of working mothers, are enrolled in day care services" (National Day Care Information Centre, 1979, p.6). These statistics do not include attendance in half-day programs (e.g., nursery schools). The National Day Care Information Centre (1979) forecasts that this trend of increasing numbers of working mothers with Preschool-aged children "will continue well into the future (p.1).

Because many children will have had experiences in organized educational programs before beginning Kindergarten, it is important to gather as much information as possible about this experience and its possible implications.

6.2 How Many Children Have Had Preschool Experience and Why Were They Enrolled?

A majority of the responding Kindergarten (61%) and Grade 1 (57%) parents indicated that their child had attended a Preschool program for an average of two years before entering Kindergarten. More than four-fifths of responding Kindergarten teachers reported that 50% of their current Kindergarten class had attended Preschool.

The national trend of increased use of Preschool programs is reflected in the percentage of parents reporting their child's attendance in a Preschool program (e.g., day care, nursery school) prior to beginning Kindergarten. Kin-

dergarten teachers indicated a similar degree of previous enrolment in Preschool programs. Sixty-three percent of the responding Preschool teachers indicated having a wait list for enrolment.

The fact is that at least half the children currently attending Kindergarten in British Columbia have had experience in a pre-Kindergarten program. As the number of children enrolled in such programs is projected to increase, planning of the Kindergarten program for the future must consider the possible implications for this trend.

From the information provided by the Kindergarten and Grade 1 parents, it appears that the majority of the children were enrolled in a nursery school program of a type involving a co-operative situation. In this setting parents are required to donate a specific amount of the time to the program; and therefore, co-operatives can usually charge lower tuition than other similar programs. These parents have been accustomed to having an active role in their children's education and written comments indicate that some of these parents were disappointed in their more limited role in the public school.

Kindergarten, Grade 1 and Preschool parents who reported enrolling their children in a Preschool program were asked to indicate why they did so (see Table 6.1).

TABLE 6.1

MAIN REASONS FOR ENROLLING CHILD IN A PRESCHOOL PROGRAM
(Entries are percentages)

What are the MAIN reasons you enrolled your child(ren) in a preschool program?			
	Parents		
Reasons*	Kindergarten n = 288	Grade 1 n = 233	Preschool n = 353
Preschool is a valuable experience for children	73	76	80
Good quality program available	60	53	55
Child wanted to go	50	52	46
No playmates own age in neighborhood	39	33	38
Conveniently located	16	21	16
Affordable	14	13	11
Working parent(s)	13	15	16
Only child	12	12	8
Reduces stress on parent	9	11	14
Special need child	4	3	1
Other	5	3	4

*More than one response was possible.

Parents who did not enrol their children in Preschool gave the following reasons (see Table 6.2).

TABLE 6.2

MAIN REASONS FOR NOT ENROLLING CHILD IN A PRESCHOOL PROGRAM
(Entries are percentages)

Check the MAIN reasons you did not enrol your child in a preschool program		
	Parents	
Reasons*	Kindergarten n = 177	Grade 1 n = 173
Child did not need preschool program	32	27
Preschool children are best kept at home	26	24
Too expensive	25	16
Too far away	23	13
No transportation available	16	17
Not available	15	18
Not satisfied with the quality of the available program(s)	9	13
Other	17	11

*More than one response was possible

A quarter of the parents of Kindergarten children indicated that a Preschool was too expensive or too far away. In comparing these responses from Kindergarten and Grade 1 parents, there is a 9-10% difference between the two groups on these items. One could speculate that the state of the economy and the price of gasoline might contribute to an increasing number of parents indicating expense and distance as reasons for not enrolling their children in a Preschool program. Several Preschool parents suggested in their written comments including Preschool programs in the public school system in order to ensure equality of opportunity.

A comparison of the most frequent reasons for enrolling or not enrolling children in Preschool reflects the two sides of the debate on Early Childhood Education; i.e., it's a valuable experience for young children vs. children do not need it and are better off at home with their mothers.

6.3 What is the Effect of Preschool Experience?

At least 50% of the responding Kindergarten and Preschool teachers, School and District Administrators indicated that children who had attended Preschool programs adapted somewhat or much better to Kindergarten when compared to children who had not attended a Preschool program. Nearly three-quarters of the Preschool teachers as compared to one-sixth of the Kindergarten teachers indicated that these children's adaptation to Kindergarten was much better. Of the four groups responding, District administrators are the least certain of the better adaptation due to Preschool attendance.

The written comments by teachers indicated that there may be a difference between children who attended nursery school (a half-day program) and those who attended a day care (full-day) program with the latter adapting somewhat less well This may be due in part to the fact that children who attend day care as well as Kindergarten are required to make daily transitions between home, Kindergarten, and day care. The number of transition sometimes result in over-tiredness and subsequent undesirable behaviours on the part of these children.

6.4 What Types of Contact Occur Between Kindergarten and Preschool Teachers?

Given the trend of more children having Preschool experience before beginning public school Kindergarten, Kindergarten and Preschool teachers were asked to indicate the various types of contact with each other.

A majority of the Kindergarten and Preschool teachers who were teaching last year reported contact. The most frequent types of contact reported by Kindergarten teachers were the exchange of information about children, contacts at professional meetings and visits of the Preschool children to the Kindergarten. In comparison, a higher percentage of Preschool teachers than Kindergarten teachers reported exchange of information and contacts at professional meetings. About twice as many Preschool teachers reported formal or informal visits to the Kindergarten than did Kindergarten teachers to daycare centres/Preschools.

The results indicate that more Preschool teachers had contact with Kindergarten teachers than vice versa. However, it may have been that a Kindergarten teacher received children from several nursery schools and day care centres whereas a majority of children in a neighbourhood Preschool attended the same public school. It may also have been the case that many day care centre teachers have contact with the Kindergarten teacher when collecting the children who attend Kindergarten for part of the day and the day care centre for the remainder.

About half of the Kindergarten teachers, District and School administrators agreed that there is a need for Kindergarten teachers to establish closer contacts with Preschool and day care centres. Only one-third of the Grade 1 teachers agreed or strongly agreed.

More than three-quarters (79%) of the responding Preschool teachers indicated a desire for more contact with Kindergarten teachers. Not one Preschool teacher indicated that they would like less contact.

The written comments of Kindergarten teachers indicated a willingness to make such contacts if release time were provided. Content analysis of Preschool teachers' written comments showed Kindergarten-Preschool contacts to be a frequently mentioned topic.

In summary, it appears that the teachers are willing, the administration is supportive, but the actual mechanics and procedures needed to establish more Kindergarten-Preschool contact and communication are lacking.

CHAPTER 7

HOW ARE CHILDREN ADMITTED TO KINDERGARTEN?

7.1 What Are the Issues in Admission to Kindergarten?

In British Columbia, children may be admitted to Kindergarten in September if they are five years old on or before December 31 of that year. School attendance is not compulsory until age seven.

Early admission is the practice of permitting children who meet established criteria to begin school before the age required by the usual enrolment policy. Such a practice is a subject of considerable debate. In a review of the literature, it was reported that parents are more supportive of the practice of early admission than are educators (Butler, 1974). This seems to be particularly the case of parents whose child "misses" the cut-off date by a few days or weeks. Early admission to Kindergarten has been used as an option for meeting the needs of gifted children. (Mayfield, 1980)(Bruga, 1971) A frequently mentioned concern about early admission is who sets the criteria and who makes the decisions.

Concern has been expressed (Duigou, 1975) about children beginning an educational career too soon. Some educators have suggested delaying school entrance until age 7 or later (Moore & Moore, 1979). Others claim that there is little or no advantage to delaying entrance for immature children (Kulberg, 1973).

7.2 What Is the Preferred Aged of Admission to Kindergarten?

All eight groups included in the survey (the Kindergarten teachers, Grade 1 teachers, Preschool teachers, School and District administrators, Kindergarten parents, Grade 1 parents and Preschool parents) were asked to indicate the earliest enrolment age at which they thought parents should have the option of sending their children to a public school. (See table 7.1)

The distribution of responses was very similar for all groups. A majority of each of the eight groups indicated five years as the age of earliest public school attendance. Although the majority of the respondents supported the current practice, a quarter to a third of the respondents supported the option of four year olds enrolling in the public school. In written comments several parents indicated that such a practice would provide equal opportunity for more children.

Table 7.1
ENROLMENT AGES
(Entries are percentages)

Check the EARLIEST age at which you think parents should have the option of enrolling their child in a public school. (Median is underlined for each responding group.)								
Age Categories	Teachers			Administrators		Parents		
	Kgn. (n=988)	Gr. 1 (n=510)	Presch. (n=343)	School (n=416)	District (n=57)	Kgn. (n=460)	Gr. 1 (n=408)	Presch. (n=352)
3 years	3	2	9	3	5	5	3	8
4 years	30	24	26	27	28	33	31	29
5 years	65	69	58	64	60	57	61	58
6 years	2	4	7	3	4	3	4	5
7 years	1	1	1	1	2	1	0	0
Other	1	1	0	1	2	1	1	1

7.3 What Is the Preferred Cut-Off Date for Admission to Kindergarten?

One-third of the responding Kindergarten teachers indicated September 1st as their preferred cut-off date. About a third of the School administrators and slightly more than half of the District administrators preferred twice-a-year entry. This option was the third most frequent choice of Kindergarten teachers. The second choice of all three groups was the current date of December 31.

Many more District administrators (54%) supported twice a year entry than did School administrators (35%) or teachers (23%). Twice-a-year entry is discussed more specifically in Section 7.5.

7.4 What Do Educators and Parents Think about Early Admissions to Kindergarten?

When asked whether the school or district had a specific policy on early admission to Kindergarten, 56% of the School administrators and 77% of the District administrators responded negatively. According to the responding Kindergarten teachers, there were no children enrolled in Kindergarten for the 1979-80 school year who did not meet the usual minimum age requirement.

A majority of Kindergarten and Grade One teachers, School (52%) and District (59%) administrators oppose early admission whereas a majority of Preschool teachers, Kindergarten, Grade 1 and Preschool parents (60% - 61%) favoured early admission. This pattern of response has been noted in other research reports. Unfortunately, it is not known what percentage of the parents respondents have or have had children who just miss the cut-off date of December 31.

7.5 What Do Educators and Parents Think about Twice-a-Year Entry?

In response to the question whether twice-a-year entry currently exists in their classes, schools or district, virtually every respondent indicated "No".

A majority of Preschool teachers and parents favoured twice-a-year entry into Kindergarten. More than two-fifths of Kindergarten and Grade 1 teachers were in favor of twice-a-year entry.

In comparing the results of this section and Section 7.3, it can be seen that the greatest support for twice-a-year entry lies first with District administrators, Preschool parents and teachers, then Kindergarten and Grade 1 parents, and is least popular with Kindergarten and Grade 1 teachers.

While the written comments of some teachers expressed doubt about twice-a-year entry because of possible administrative difficulties, others pointed out the flexibility twice-a-year entry could provide.

7.6 Should Kindergarten Attendance Be Compulsory?

A majority(varying between 56% & 70%) of Kindergarten and Grade 1 teachers, Kindergarten, Grade 1, and Preschool parents favoured compulsory Kindergarten attendance for all children of eligible age. There was not a clear pattern of response, for or against, compulsory Kindergarten from Preschool teachers, School or District administrators. District administrators were least supportive. This may be due in part to concern over possible administrative implications of compulsory Kindergarten (e.g., 1/2 F.T.E. funding, bussing, staffing, etc.).

In comparing the results of this section with Section 7.2, it appears that most respondents favour Kindergarten attendance by five year olds to the degree of making it compulsory but generally do not favour the enrolment of children younger than five years of age in the public schools.

Kindergarten and Grade 1 teachers, School and District administrators were asked whether or not, in their classes, schools or districts, respectively six year old children can be admitted to Kindergarten, instead of Grade 1, if these children had not previously attended Kindergarten.

Sixty-one percent of the responding Kindergarten teachers, 51% of the Grade 1 teachers, 72% of the School administrators and 90% of the District administrators indicated this was possible. Approximately one-third of the Kindergarten and Grade 1 teachers indicated they did not know. Sixteen percent of the School administrators and 2% of the District administrators indicated a "Don't know" response.

A majority of responding Kindergarten, Grade 1 and Preschool teachers, as well as School administrators favoured admitting children to Kindergarten at age 6 if they had had no previous Kindergarten attendance. The opinions of Kindergarten, Grade 1, and Preschool parents were divided. A relatively large percentage (21-38%) indicated they had a neutral position on this subject. From the written comments it appeared that many respondents had not encountered this particular situation.

CHAPTER 8

WHAT TYPES OF PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT AND FACILITIES ARE FOUND IN KINDERGARTEN?

8.1 Why are the Environment and Facilities Important?

Relatively little research has been done on the effects of the physical environment on young children and their learning even though "it is axiomatic that the physical environment of a school is important as a factor in each child's learning" (Anderson, 1971, p.278). In an Early Childhood program, it is crucial that the materials and equipment necessary to support the goals and objectives of the program are available.

Aspects of the physical environment that have been of continuing interest to Early Childhood educators are the amount of space, the materials and equipment, how these materials are arranged, and the related issue of funding for these items.

8.2 What do Kindergarten Teachers Think of the Physical Environment of the Kindergarten?

The current standards for Kindergarten classroom size are found in the School Building Manual (1967)(i.e., 896 square feet maximum). Information from the proposed Schools Facilities Manual Part 4, Space Standards, October 1980, states "where Kindergarten enrolment is 10 or more Kindergarten facilities may be provided up to maximum areas for every 50 Kindergarten pupils of 80m^2 (860 square feet) for general instruction space and an additional 34m^2 (366 square feet) of design space" (4.2.2). Recommendations in the 1954 Kindergarten Manual and from professional organizations (Association for Childhood Education International, 1967; BCTF, 1973) indicate 1080-1500 square feet is necessary for conducting Kindergarten classrooms.

The size of the room was reported by the responding teachers as being "Excellent" by 16%, "Good" by 21%, "Adequate" by 35%, and "Poor" or "Very Poor" by 28%.

On the average, responding Kindergarten teachers reported the following components of the physical environment as adequate or better:

- Access to the library
- Indoor play area and/or access to the gymnasium
- Easy access to an outdoor play area (36% do not have a separate Kindergarten outdoor play area)

-Indoor decorations
-Chalkboards
-Artificial lighting
-Floor coverings
-Bulletin boards
-Sinks
-Heating
-Ventilation and humidity
-Window area for natural lighting
-Cloakroom area
-Sound proofing.

Though storage space for the children's belongings was reported as being very adequate or better by 65% of the responding teachers, the overall storage for supplies and teachers' materials was rated as poor or worse by 41-43%. Half of the responding teachers rated electrical outlets and storage for outdoor equipment as poorest of all components.

Most often not present in the Kindergarten physical environments were:

-Refrigerators
-Stoves
-Storage for large outdoor equipment
-Hot water
-Toilets
-Window coverings.

Kindergarten teachers were asked to rate the physical environment as it presently exists in their Kindergarten classrooms. Six percent indicated the physical environment was "Excellent;" 33% rated it "Good;" 43% rated it "Adequate;" 16% rated it "Poor;" and 2% rated it as "Very Poor."

Although generally satisfied with the physical environment of their classrooms, Kindergarten teachers indicated that improvement could be made about electrical outlets, storage, stoves, refrigerators, hot water in the Kindergarten room and washrooms attached to the classroom.

The equipment and facilities provided for the Kindergarten affect the curriculum. For example, the fact that most teachers do not have ready access to refrigerators, stoves (and the heavy-duty electrical outlets needed), and running water means that, in many classrooms, cooking by the children is limited. This in turn has implications for the degree of emphasis that can be placed on this aspect of the Kindergarten curriculum.

8.3 What do Kindergarten Teachers Think of the Equipment and Supplies in their Kindergartens?

The responding Kindergarten teachers, on the average, reported the following to be in sufficient quantity: tables and chairs, blocks, paper materials, books, art supplies, A-V equipment, manipulative materials, musical instruments, sand tables, and water tables. Forty-four to 78% reported that the following were insufficient or not present: first aid equipment, science materials, large wheel toys, outdoor equipment, woodworking equipment and supplies, and live animal facilties.

On the average, the equipment and supplies the responding Kindergarten teachers reported as being sufficient in quantity were also rated as adequate or better quality. The equipment and supplies available but not in sufficient quantity on the average were also rated the poorest quality by the responding teachers.

Again, the concern arises that if such things as live animals and woodworking experiences are desirable in a Kindergarten program, provision of the necessary equipment is required.

8.4 What Types of Activity Centres are Present in Kindergartens?

At least four-fifths of the responding Kindergarten and Grade 1 teachers, District and School administrators agreed that "much of the Kindergarten program should be organized around activity centres" (Resource Book for Kindergartens, 1973, p.29).

A majority of responding Kindergarten teachers reported the following activity centres to be set up and available on a daily or weekly basis:

Book	Quiet area
Block	Modelling
Dramatic Play	Construction and Manipulation
Home	Math and Science
Music	Listening and Viewing
Painting	Sand and Water
Arts and Crafts	P.E.
Assembly	

Centres set up less frequently, but still available on a weekly or monthly basis, were puppets and theatre, and cooking. The animal and pet centre and woodwork centre were least frequently used by the responding teachers.

The less frequent availability of activity centres such as cooking, animals and pets, and woodworking may be due to the lack of the equipment necessary for these centres.

The availability and quality of equipment and materials are essential in the setting up of these activity centres. The lack in quantity and/or quality of science materials, large wheel toys, outdoor equipment, live animal facilities, and woodworking equipment and supplies is a direct factor in the lessened availability of the centres using these items.

8.5 How Adequate are the Kindergarten Funding Formula and Available Funds?

The current funding formula used by the Ministry of Education is based on the amount of time a child spends in school. Therefore, for funding purposes, a Kindergarten child in a half-day program is funded at one-half the amount for a child in the primary grades (i.e., full-day program). Approximately three-quarters of the Kindergarten teachers, School and District administrators rated the current funding formula as somewhat or very inadequate.

Nearly all the responding School and District administrators stated that money is made available from general funds at the school and district level for incidental expenses in Kindergarten; however, a majority of the responding Kindergarten teachers rated the adequacy of such funds as somewhat or very inadequate. There was a significant difference between rural and urban situations as more urban teachers indicated funding was adequate or better and more rural teachers reported no such funds were available.

CHAPTER 9

HOW IS AND HOW SHOULD KINDERGARTEN BE ORGANIZED?

9.1 What Do Teachers and Parents Think About Class Size?

Class size is a perennial issue in educational circles. It is a high priority concern of classroom teachers, administrators, school trustees, and parents. Major reviews of the literature on class size have reported conflicting results (Cahen & Filby, 1979). Very little research has dealt specifically with class size in Kindergarten.

Polls of classroom teachers have shown that teachers believe small classes are important in improving academic achievement (National Education Association, 1975) and that the biggest handicap in teaching is large class size (Instructor, 1980). Parents have also expressed concern about class size (Gallup, 1979).

Two recent reports to individual school districts in British Columbia described the concern of teachers, administrators and parents on Kindergarten class size (Mayfield,(1980;Scarfe, Berger & Polowy, 1980). Both reports indicated agreement among parents, principals, and teachers that reduction of class size would improve the Kindergarten program. It was recommended that Kindergarten class size should not exceed 20 pupils and that where special needs children are included in the regular Kindergarten class, that the class size be adjusted or "weighted" according to some reasonable factor.

In this section, class size is discussed in reference to classrooms of "typical" children. The idea of "weighting" class sizes when special needs children are included in the regular classroom is discussed in Chapter 13.

Kindergarten teachers were asked to give the enrolment for their classes. Both the teachers who taught one session and those teachers who taught two sessions indicated a a current class enrolment of 18-20 students. When asked to give a number for the class size of an ideal Kindergarten, Kindergarten teachers, Kindergarten and Grade 1 parents most frequently indicated 15 students. Kindergarten teachers indicated that 19-20 children was the maximum number of typical children that could be accommodated per session given present resources and facilities.

Written comments by all groups were nearly unanimous in the desirability for reducing class size in Kindergarten.

9.2 How and Why is Kindergarten Combined with other Grades?

Ten percent of the responding Kindergarten teachers teach a class which combines Kindergarten and another grade. Of these, 8% were K/1 transition classes and the others were Kindergarten-Grade 1 (42%); Kindergarten, Grade 1 and 2 (25%); Kindergarten, Grade 1, 2 and 3 (17%) combinations.

The Kindergarten teachers who were in charge of combined classes, reported that there were(on average) 12 children from another grade in their classrooms. Twenty-one percent of the responding School administrators and 55% of the District administrators, reported classes which combine Kindergarten with another grade.

TABLE 9.1

REASONS FOR KINDERGARTEN-GRADE COMBINATIONS
(Entries are percentages)

Major Reason for Combining Kindergarten with Other Grades	Teachers	Administrators	
	Kindergarten (n=100)	School (n=88)	District (n=32)
Low enrolment	54	61	78
Multi-age/family grouping	23	13	6
Teacher preference	2	2	9
Continuous progress	5	8	6
Other	16	16	-

Low enrolment, the major reported reason for combining Kindergarten with another grade (see Table 9.1), is an administrative arrangement, not an educational decision.

Fifty-four percent of the Kindergarten teachers and 52% of the administrators stated that the combining of classes is a policy at the school level. Thirty-seven percent of the teachers and 44% of the administrators stated that this is policy at the district level.

Overall, a majority of Kindergarten (71%) and Grade 1 (68%) teachers, School (66%) and District (48%) administrators, and Kindergarten (70%) and Grade 1 (66%) parents opposed combining a Kindergarten class full-time with primary grades.

The majority of responding Kindergarten and Grade 1 teachers, School and District administrators agreed that combining Kindergarten with a Grade 1 class or with other primary grades increases the range of abilities, allows for continuous progress, changes the character of the Kindergarten program and decreases time for other grades. A

majority of Kindergarten and Grade 1 teachers and School administrators also agree that this situation requires diverse teacher competencies.

A majority of District administrators agree that combining Kindergarten and other grades provides for a flexible program whereas a majority of Kindergarten teachers disagree. However, it is unclear whether flexibility was administrative or educational.

9.3 How is the Kindergarten Day Organized?

The length of the Kindergarten day in Canada varies from half-day programs (usually 2-2½ hours long) to full-day programs (5-6 hours). The opinions expressed on this topic are varied; and overall the results of research studies do not show conclusive evidence of the advantages of full-day or half-day programs.

In British Columbia, the Report of the Royal Commission on Education (1960) recommended that "daily attendance in Kindergarten be not longer than one-half of a school day" (p.127). The Canadian Education Association (1972) reported that "a half-day (2½ hours) class is the norm in Canadian Kindergarten" (p.18).

9.3.1 What is the Actual and Preferred Length of Day for Kindergarten?

The means for the actual average daily length and the preferred daily length of the Kindergarten sessions as reported by Kindergarten teachers, School and District administrators were almost identical to the length of most Kindergarten sessions in Canada (i.e., 2½ hours).

9.3.2 Which Kindergarten Class Schedule Do Parents Prefer?

Grade 1 parents were asked to indicate which class schedules they would have preferred for their Kindergarten child. Of the respondents, 49% indicated a preference for mornings only. Only 6% preferred afternoon sessions. The second most popular schedule (31%) was "mornings part of the year/afternoons part of the year." There was little support for full-day Kindergartens either part of the week (6%) or every day (5%).

Of the responding Kindergarten teachers, 35% switch classes at mid-year, 33% did not, and 32% teach only one Kindergarten session.

9.3.3 What is the Typical Kindergarten Timetable?

In order to arrive at an idea of the approximate time spent on various areas of the curriculum, Kindergarten teachers were asked to estimate the number of minutes per week they scheduled for each of the areas given in the timetable in the Resource Book for Kindergartens.

Based on the information from responding Kindergarten teachers, the typical Kindergarten day consists of 15 minutes for Group Opening/arrival time; 50 - 60 minutes for Activity time/freeplay/work period; 13 minutes of music; 18 minutes of movement education; 20 - 24 minutes of Language Arts; 10 - 18 minutes for snack, toileting, and rest; plus 5 minutes for dismissal. This allotment of time is very similar to that suggested in the Resource Book for Kindergartens with the exception that the latter allots more time (i.e., 25 minutes) to snack, rest, and toileting. This difference is accounted for in that the most frequent response given to items referring rest and toileting was 0 minutes. Many Kindergarten teachers commented that because of the integrated nature of their programs it was difficult to state a specific number of minutes for certain areas. This resulted in some large variations in time allotments given by Kindergarten teachers.

9.3.4 Why are Shortened Sessions Used in Kindergarten in September?

Sixty percent of the responding Kindergarten teachers, 62% of the Kindergarten parents and 37% of the Grade 1 parents indicated that Kindergarten sessions in September were shorter than those in later months.

Kindergarten teachers reported shortened sessions were used for a median of 7 days; Grade 1 parents reported a median of 11 days (for last year's Kindergarten); and Kindergarten parents reported a median of 5 days.

When Kindergarten teachers, Kindergarten and Grade 1 parents, were asked the main purpose of the shortened sessions, they agreed that the main purposes were orientation for the child and staggered entry. The two reasons for shortened sessions suggested in the Resource Book for Kindergartens (i.e., observation of children and interviews with parents) were not considered to be main purposes by nearly all respondents.

Twenty-one percent of the Kindergarten and Grade 1 parents indicated that the shortened sessions caused problems for themselves or their child.

Twice as many (72%) Kindergarten teachers as Kindergarten, Grade 1 and Preschool parents favoured shortened sessions for all children. Grade 1 teachers (45%) and Preschool parents (46%) tended to favour shortened sessions only for children who need it. Kindergarten (41%) and Grade 1 (47%) parents most frequently did not favour shortened sessions. Although parents and Kindergarten teachers agreed on the main purposes of shortened sessions, they disagreed on the need for them.

9.4 What Is the Effect of Transportation?

Of the responding Kindergarten teachers, 63% reported that none of their children used transportation arranged by the school district. Only 5% indicated all of their children used district arranged transportation. Of the Kindergarten teachers who indicated they taught a second Kindergarten class, 71% reported that none of the children used district arranged transportation.

Of the 68% of the Kindergarten teachers who reported that the methods of travel used by children had an impact on their Kindergarten program, the most frequently indicated effect was a longer day for the children. Half of the teachers also indicated that other effects included more teacher time spent supervising, more tired children, and more absenteeism in bad weather. The last effect was reported by 18% more rural teachers than urban teachers. In general, transportation had a greater impact on the Kindergarten programs of rural teachers than on the programs of urban teachers. Written comments of parents and Kindergarten teachers indicated further that transportation is a problem in some rural areas.

CHAPTER 10

HOW EFFECTIVE ARE THE CURRENT KINDERGARTEN CURRICULUM GUIDES?

10.1 What Kindergarten Curriculum Guides Have Been Available in B.C.?

In 1946, a Kindergarten Curriculum Committee was established and wrote Programme of Studies for Elementary Schools in British Columbia: Kindergarten Manual (1948). This manual was revised in 1954.

The latest revision of the Kindergarten curriculum resulted in the publication of the Kindergarten Curriculum Guide (1973) and a Resource Book for Kindergartens (1973). The purpose of the Kindergarten Curriculum Guide was "to provide basic information relating to the revised Kindergarten programme. In addition to presenting the philosophy and objectives of the new programme the guide discussed the creation of a desirable learning environment and the implementation of an integrated curriculum" (n.p.). The Resource Book for Kindergartens was designed "to supplement the curriculum guide by providing a wealth of additional information and suggestions" (Kindergarten Curriculum Guide, 1973, n.p.).

10.2 What Do Kindergarten Teachers Think of the Current Guides?

More than four-fifths (88%) of the responding Kindergarten teachers indicated that at least they were somewhat familiar with the Kindergarten Curriculum Guide and Resource Book, and use them to at least a moderate extent. A few Kindergarten teachers indicated in their written comments that they had never seen a copy of the Curriculum Guide.

When Kindergarten teachers who indicated they were at least slightly familiar with the Kindergarten Curriculum Guide and Resource Book were asked to rate the quality of each of these guides, the majority rated the Curriculum Guide as fair to good (73%) and the Resource Book as good to excellent (79%).

Content analysis of the written comments of Kindergarten teachers in the questionnaires showed the Resource Book to be the most frequently mentioned topic. The comments by Kindergarten teachers indicated a desire for an up-dating of content and/or improvement in quality of the guides while expressing concern that any revision not be prescriptive.

10.3 What Are Kindergarten Teachers' Preference for Some Areas of Kindergarten Curriculum?

A majority of responding Kindergarten and Grade 1 teachers wanted:

MORE:

- -Preparation time
- -Time for conference with parents

SAME AMOUNT:

- -Free activity time
- -Fine arts
- -Social sciences
- -Activity centres
- -Mathematics
- -Readiness for reading
- -Formalized reading
- -Opportunities for parent observation
- -Parent involvement.

It is noted that 46% of the responding Grade 1 teachers wanted more reading readiness in Kindergarten compared to only 28% of the Kindergarten teachers.

Three-quarters of the Kindergarten teachers, but only half the Grade 1 teachers, indicated more release time for conferences with parents is needed. This may be a reflection of Kindergarten teachers' preference for conferences as a means of reporting to parents (see Chapter 5).

Seventy percent of both responding Kindergarten and Grade 1 teachers indicated that emphasis on activity centres should receive the same emphasis as at present. Also, there is a very high percentage of agreement among responding Kindergarten (94%) and Grade 1 (83%) teachers, School (84%) and District (95%) administrators that an integrated curriculum is most effective for Kindergarten.

10.4 What are Kindergarten Teachers' Preferences for Curriculum Guides?

If the Kindergarten curriculum were to be revised, a majority of responding Kindergarten teachers

WANT:

- -More suggestions for possible units or activities
- -A specific statement of goals and purposes of Kindergarten
- -A description of suitable tests and observation instruments for use in Kindergarten
- -A more specific statement on play
- -A list of specific skills

-A more comprehensive statement on the teaching of reading;

DO NOT WANT:

-Required units or activities.

A larger percentage of rural than urban teachers, (15 % more) expressed a need for a list of specific skills which would be attained by the children. This finding may be related to the fact that the rural Kindergarten teachers did not think they were as well-prepared by pre-service training as urban teachers and have fewer years of training (see Chapter 4).

Kindergarten and Grade 1 teachers, School and District administrators were asked to agree/disagree with the following idea expressed in the Resource Book for Kindergartens: Play is the most important learning method of Kindergarten children. The difference of at least 20% between the level of agreement by Kindergarten teachers and that of the other respondents indicates that play was seen as more important by Kindergarten teachers than by Grade 1 teachers and administrators. This lends support to the opinion of a majority of Kindergarten teachers that a more specific statement on the role of play is needed in the revised Kindergarten curriculum guides.

Written comments of Kindergarten teachers indicated statements on goals and purposes, play, and reading are needed in order to clarify the Kindergarten curriculum.

A majority of the responding Kindergarten teachers indicated that the Kindergarten Curriculum Guide and Resource Book should be kept separate. However, the respondents were almost equally divided on including the Kindergarten curriculum as a subsection in the other elementary level curriculum guides. These results may reflect the fact that while Kindergarten curriculum should not be developed in isolation from the rest of the elementary curriculum, they are concerned that the uniqueness of Kindergarten be recognized.

10.5 What Are Kindergarten Teachers' Preferences for Sections of the Current Resource Book for Kindergartens?

The responding Kindergarten teachers advised that all sections of the Resource Book be either left the same or updated. Only a very small percentage (0-2%) of the teachers advised deleting or decreasing any of the sections.

A majority of the responding Kindergarten teachers indicated that the following sections should be

UPDATED:

- -Ideas that work
- -Equipment, supplies, and materials and where to obtain them
- -List of publications for both children and teachers
- -Evaluation

LEFT THE SAME:

- -Blocks of Time
- -Parent Teacher Partnerships
- -First Days
- -The Kindergarten Child.

Opinion was divided as to the following sections should be updated or left the same:

- -Subject Areas
- -Activity Centres
- -An Integrated Curriculum
- -The Learning Environment
- -Work Period
- -Field Trips
- -The Kindergarten Setting.

In view of the fact that changes have occurred since the printing of the Kindergarten Curriculum Guide in 1973, a review of these sections, especially Subject Areas, may be advisable.

In summary, the sections of the Resource Book that Kindergarten teachers want up-dated or expanded are those concerned with the practical, day-to-day, "how-to" aspects of teaching Kindergarten. The responding teachers are more satisfied with those sections dealing with more general areas (e.g., scheduling, the Kindergarten child).

CHAPTER 11

WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP OF KINDERGARTEN TO GRADE1?

11.1 What Types of Contact Exist Between Kindergarten and Grade 1 Teachers?

A conclusion in Language B.C. (1976), was "that more coordination of Kindergarten and primary programs would result in a greater understanding by all teachers of the expectations upon them and a more effective transition for children from one level to another" (v.1, p.29). This continuity between Kindergarten and Grade 1 has been of concern to educators for some time.

Kindergarten and Grade 1 teachers were asked to indicate activities they used to facilitate coordination and communication (see Table 11.1).

TABLE 11.1

ACTIVITIES USED TO FACILITATE COORDINATION AND COMMUNICATION BETWEEN KINDERGARTEN AND GRADE 1 TEACHERS
(Entries are percentages)

Methods of facilitating program coordination and communication*	Teachers selecting method	
	Kindergarten n = 814	Grade 1 n = 434
Beginning of the year meeting of teachers	43	61
Periodic conference of kindergarten and Grade 1 teachers	57	64
End of the year meeting of teachers	63	74
Informal discussion among kindergarten and Grade 1 teachers	92	95
Informal observations	37	60
Primary teachers' meeting - in school	37	49
Primary teachers' meeting - district wide	38	44
Written reports and/or records	72	76
Visit of kindergarten children to Grade 1	67	67
Other	8	12
None of the above	1	1

*More than one response was possible

There is majority agreement among Kindergarten and Grade 1 teachers, School and District administrators that there is a need for increased communication and coordination between Kindergarten and Grade 1 teachers which would promote an understanding by all teachers of the expectations upon them, and to promote a more effective transition for children from one level to another.

More communication is desired between Kindergarten and Grade 1 teachers as well as between Kindergarten and Preschool teachers. Support from a majority of administrators is also present.

11.2 What Do Teachers and Administrators Think of Kindergarten-Grade 1 Transition Classes?

One possible solution for children judged to be insufficiently prepared for Grade 1 is to place them in a transition class. In this survey, a transition class was defined as "a class for children who have had a year in Kindergarten but who are not judged capable of coping with a regular Grade 1 program; also known as a junior Grade 1."

Over three-quarters of Kindergarten teachers, Grade 1 teachers, School and District administrators favoured Kindergarten-Grade 1 transition classes. The most frequently reported reason for this was that such classes provide time for children to mature.

A small percentage of Kindergarten teachers (9%), Grade 1 teachers (11%), School (14%) and District (14%) administrators did not favour transition classes, most frequently because of the small number of children who need such classes. If only a few children need a transition class, they might have to be moved to another school in order to make up sufficient numbers for a class and this could be a possible source of problems (e.g., transportation and school outside of the neighbourhood). However, the written comments of teachers indicated that class size of transition classes should be kept small because of the type of class.

11.3 What Are the Effects of the Grade 1 Curriculum on Kindergarten?

A current concern expressed by teachers is the effect of the Grade 1 curriculum on the Kindergarten. In Language B.C., such a concern was identified as "an increasing tendency for Kindergarten programs to be a watered-down version of a formal Grade 1 program" (v.1,p.28).

Kindergarten and Grade 1 teachers, as well as administrators, were asked if they thought there had been an increase, a decrease, or no change of emphasis in various aspects of the Kindergarten program in their situation as a result of the Grade 1 curriculum.

While they are all agreed that there had been no change in emphasis on play, affective development, social skills, and motor skills, there were disagreements on the emphasis given academic skills. Both Kindergarten and Grade 1 teachers indicated that there had been an increased emphasis given academic skills, while school and district administrators maintained that the emphasis in this area had not changed as a result of the Grade 1 curriculum.

If there is a difference in perception by teachers and administrators throughout the province, this may indicate a need for more clarification of the term "academic skills" in Kindergarten. It was found earlier (see Chapter 10) that a majority of Kindergarten teachers favoured the addition of a specific statement of goals and purposes of Kindergarten and a list of specific skills in a revised Kindergarten curriculum guide.

Kindergarten teachers were asked if the demands of the Grade 1 curriculum on children are "Too high", "About right", or "Too low". Forty-two percent of the responding Kindergarten teachers thought the demands are too high, 47% thought they are about right, 1% thought they are too low and 10% indicated they didn't know.

11.4 What is the Place of Reading in the Kindergarten?

When the topics of the effects of Grade 1 on Kindergarten or the role of academics in the Kindergarten are discussed, the area of the curriculum most frequently focussed on is reading. Reading in the Kindergarten has long been a topic of discussion among educators and a source of concern for parents. Educational literature, both scholarly and popular, has included large numbers of articles and books published on the subject.

In the 1950's and 60's the issue was: Could young children be taught to read? The 1970's saw the issue become: Why should children be taught earlier and who should receive what type of instruction?

Kindergarten and Grade 1 teachers and School and District administrators were asked to check their agreement or disagreement with listed statements about reading in the Kindergarten curriculum. Their responses are tabulated in Table 11.2.

TABLE 11.2

READING IN THE KINDERGARTEN
(Entries are percentages)

The following represent some people's opinions about the Kindergarten curriculum. Check the extent of your agreement or disagreement with each one.

Statement	Teachers						Administrators					
	Kindergarten (n=1004-1077)			Grade 1 (n=515-524)			School (n=418-422)			District (n = 58)		
	Agree	Neu-tral	Dis-Agree	Agree	Neu-tral	Dis-agree	Agree	Neu-tral	Dis-agree	Agree	Neu-tral	Dis-agree
Children should be given a reading readiness test on entry to Kindergarten	10	10	80	21	7	72	15	11	74	20	5	75
Children who are ready to read should be given formal reading instruction in the Kindergarten	13	12	75	21	8	71	27	14	59	31	1	68
Children who are ready to read should be encouraged to continue their interest	98	2	0	97	2	1	96	2	2	96	4	0
Kindergarten children who are already reading should receive formal instruction in reading	19	16	65	26	10	64	32	16	52	37	2	61
Kindergarten children who are already reading should be encouraged to continue their interest	98	2	0	98	1	1	97	1	2	95	3	2

The majority of teachers and the administrators disagree with a policy of giving children a reading readiness test on entry to Kindergarten. The responses are similar when considering the inclusion of formal reading instruction in the Kindergarten curriculum although a greater percentage of administrators than teachers agree with this statement.

The respondents almost unanimously agreed that children who are ready to read or are already reading should be encouraged to continue their interest. For the children who are already reading, their interest should not be furthered by formal instruction in reading, according to a majority of

the Kindergarten and Grade 1 teachers, and District and School administrators.

11.5 What is the Role of Formal and Informal Reading/Reading Readiness in the Kindergarten?

The debate on reading in the Kindergarten has been clouded by exactly what is meant by reading. Traditionally, early reading instruction has been classified as informal or formal instruction.

The current Resource Book for Kindergartens (1973) emphasizes the integrated curriculum and "within this integrated curriculum the teacher will be aware of the (traditional) subject areas but her emphasis will be on the child in the various activity centres, any one of which might embrace all these subject areas" (p.20). In terms of reading specifically, "initial reading experiences come informally and gradually, and from the children's own needs" (p.40).

Kindergarten and Grade 1 teachers, School and District administrators were asked if Kindergarten teachers are pressured to run a formal reading or reading readiness program (see Table 11.3).

TABLE 11.3

PRESSURE TO DO FORMALIZED READING/READING READINESS
(Entries are percentages)

Percentage of respondents agreeing with each statement.				
	Teachers		Administrators	
Statement	Kindergarten (n=1011)	Grade 1 (n=524)	School (n=419-423)	District (n = 57)
Kindergarten teachers are pressured to run a formal READING program in the Kindergarten.	16	13	15	15
Kindergarten teachers are pressured to run a formal READING READINESS program in the Kindergarten	51	43	45	55
If agreed with either of the above statements, what is the MAIN source of the pressure?				
	Teachers		Administrators	
Statement	Kindergarten (n=422)	Grade 1 (n=195)	School (n=154)	District (n = 25)
Parents	46	36	53	48
Grade 1 teacher(s)	22	24	14	8
Administration (District Level)	20	25	16	20
Other Kindergarten Teachers	4	8	7	4
Children	2	1	1	-
Principal	1	2	7	8
Other	5	4	2	12

A small percentage of responding teachers, School and District administrators agreed that there are pressures on the teachers to teach reading formally in the Kindergarten. Almost half indicated that Kindergarten teachers are pressured to have a formal reading readiness program, with this pressure being evident to approximately half the Kindergarten teachers and District administrators. A difference of opinion exists over the place of more formal programs in Kindergarten and/or what constitutes formal and informal programs.

Of the forty percent of teachers who perceived that there is pressure for either a formal reading program or a reading readiness program, approximately half of the responding Kindergarten teachers, School and District administrators named parents as the main source of pressure. Approximately a third of the Grade 1 teachers shared this point of view. About one-quarter of the Grade 1 teachers and Kindergarten teachers felt that the expectations of Grade 1 teachers exert pressures to include formal reading activities in the Kindergarten. Other Kindergarten teachers, the children, the principal, or other teachers, seem to be exerting neglible pressure on the Kindergarten program in this respect.

From written comments of parents in the questionnaires, it appears that many parents have a different perception of the role of reading in the Kindergarten than do teachers and administrators. This divergence of opinion seems to indicate a need for clarification of reading/reading readiness in the Kindergarten. The present Kindergarten curriculum guides do not seem to meet this need.

In response to the question which asked if they had formal reading in their Kindergarten programs, 92% of the teachers stated that they did not. Four percent indicated that they did have formal reading and 4% were undecided about the question. Sixty-one percent had formal reading readiness in their Kindergarten program while 31% did not. Eight percent were undecided about whether they did or did not. It may be that they were really undecided about what constitutes a formal reading/reading readiness program.

Overall, the majority of responding Kindergarten teachers reported using more formal approaches to reading readiness than the procedures suggested in the current Resource Book.

CHAPTER 12

HOW ARE KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN ASSESSED?

12.1 What Is the Current Role of Screening?

In the past few years, there has been an increased interest in the early identification of children who might have difficulty in the early school years (Bradley, 1975; O'Bryan, 1976; Pope, Lehrer, & Stevens, 1980). One author commented that "Kindergarten screening is one small part of a ground swell movement which recognizes the importance of educators becoming involved with the child at a young age in order to prevent or reduce failure in school and in life" (Zeitlin, 1976, p.vii). It is recognized that the earlier possible problems are accurately identified and intervention begun the likelihood of success is increased (Commission on Emotional and Learning Disorders in Children, 1970).

It has become common for screening to include medical data, information from parents and observation as well as structured assessment although there is quite a degree of variance in the type and purpose of some of these instruments. The current Ministry of Education policies in British Columbia are to encourage school districts to develop their own systems of assessment (Special Programs: A Manual of Policies, Procedures and Guidelines, 1980, District Assessment Policy: Policies and Procedures, 1978, and Policy Guidelines: District Assessment Practices, 1978. Some districts have formulated policies on screening and have established on-going programs. Other districts have neither policies nor programs for screening children. Still other districts are in the process of piloting screening programs.

For the items on the questionnaire, screening was defined as "a systematic attempt, at any time, to identify children's strengths and weaknesses."

12.2 Are Kindergarten Children Screened?

Eighty-five percent of the Kindergarten teachers reported that some of their pupils have been screened. One hundred percent of the pupils in half of all the Grade 1 classrooms have been screened in Kindergarten. Thirty-five percent of the total Grade 1 pupils had not been screened in Kindergarten.

12.3 What Are the Purposes of Screening?

An average of eighty-three percent of all the teachers, parents and administrators who responded were in favour of screening (Range: 79% - 88%).

Kindergarten teachers were asked to indicate what were the main purpose(s) of Kindergarten screening in their school last year. In addition, Kindergarten and Grade 1 teachers, School and District administrators who favoured screening were asked to identify what should be the main purpose(s) of screening. These results are summarized in Table 12.1.

TABLE 12.1

PURPOSES OF SCREENING
(Entries are percentages)

Purposes	Percent of Respondents Selecting Purpose				
	Presently	Recommended			
	Teachers	Teachers		Administrators	
	Kgn (n=719)	Kgn (n=835)	Gr.1 (n=454)	School (n=338)	District (n = 50)
To delay entry into Kindergarten	1	9	9	5	2
To accelerate entry into Kindergarten	0	4	5	6	2
To delay entry into Grade 1	12	16	26	6	0
To accelerate entry into Grade 1	2	5	8	4	0
To identify "at risk" children	81	75	67	68	73
To plan the Kindergarten curriculum	24	37	18	25	33
To plan programs for individual children	54	67	53	56	77
To provide information for parents	35	35	22	26	22

More than four-fifths of the respondents indicated "to identify 'at risk' children" as the main purpose. More than half of the teachers also indicated "to plan programs for individual children." The Kindergarten teachers, Grade 1 teachers and School administrators thought the main purpose of screening should be: To identify "at risk" children, to plan programs for individual children, and to identify "high ability" children. District administrators identified the same first two as being the main purposes, but in reverse order.

Comparing the purposes of screening as they should be to the purposes as they are from the Kindergarten teachers, reveals the same five main purposes, but in slightly different order. The Kindergarten teachers indicated that they would like to see more of the screening results used for identifying "high ability" children, planning programs for individual children, and for planning the Kindergarten curriculum.

This concern with identifying special needs children has implications for training (pre-service and in-service) of Kindergarten teachers (see Chapters 4 and 13), and for the hiring of qualified personnel for the screening of Kindergarten children.

About one-sixth of the teachers and administrators were against screening. They felt that the test methods were not reliable, and that the children would be labelled.

12.4 When Is Screening Done?

For Kindergarten teachers who indicated an existing screening program, the most frequently indicated times for such screening were: on-going throughout the year (little less than half); year-end (one-fifth) and mid-term (little more than one-sixth). Less than one-tenth of the screening occurred before entry into Kindergarten.

The time category "on-going throughout the year" was most frequently selected by teachers and both groups of administrators as the choice when screening should be done.

12.5 Who Administers Screening?

The Kindergarten teachers, the Learning Assistance teacher, and the Public Health nurse, in that order, were identified by more than half of the Kindergarten teachers as the main persons who carry out the screening of children. A little more than one-third of the Kindergarten teachers also listed the Speech therapist. Only one-seventh of the Kindergarten teachers indicated another person.

More than four-fifths of both groups of teachers and administrators indicated that the Kindergarten teacher should carry out the screening process. This contrasts with two-thirds of the Kindergarten teachers who were involved in screening when it occurs.

12.6 What Instruments Are Used for Screening?

About one-third of the teachers who used screening instruments reported that they developed their own. Almost one-third used the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test and about one-fifth the Jansky-de Hirsch and about one-fifth the Metropolitan Readiness Tests.

12.7 What Factors Are Assessed in Screening?

Language development received the most attention in screening with more than four-fifths of the Kindergarten teachers reporting screening this characteristic in some way. More than two-thirds of the teachers assessed general health and motor abilities as part of the screening. About two-fifths of the teachers assessed social/emotional development and less than one-third attempted to assess intelligence and learning rate.

Kindergarten, Grade 1 and Preschool teachers, School and District administrators, and Kindergarten, Grade 1 and Preschool parents were asked to indicate how important various areas should be as part of Kindergarten screening. All groups, except Grade 1 teachers and Kindergarten parents, rated general health as the most important characteristic to screen, The Grade 1 teachers put more importance on screening language development than did the Kindergarten teachers. Kindergarten parents considered social/emotional development as being the most important characteristic to screen. All groups rated intelligence as the least important characteristic to screen. Although intelligence was ranked last by all the groups, it was nevertheless rated to be of some importance in a screening program. Almost one-third of the Kindergarten teachers screened for this.

12.8 What Is the Role of Evaluation in the Kindergarten Program?

The Resource Book for Kindergarten (1973) contains the statement "Teacher and programme effectiveness is evaluated through observing and recording the growth and progress of each child toward suitable goals for him or her. Early, systematic, and continuous evaluation is an integral part of teaching (p.85)." The Resource Book then lists personal and social growth, language, auditory discrimination, visual perception, large and small muscle control, knowledge and problem solving as important areas of growth for each child. These areas of growth can be measured using a multitude of different instruments and techniques (Evans, 1974; Boehm & Weinberg, 1977). The results of any systematic attempt to

evaluate the Kindergarten child can also be reported in many different ways.

12.9 What Evaluation Techniques are used by Kindergarten Teachers?

Kindergarten teachers were asked to indicate how frequently they used the thirteen evaluation methods listed to collect information on the typical Kindergarten child's ability, skills, attitudes or behaviour. The assessment of special needs children was excluded.

Kindergarten teachers reported using the following evaluations methods most often:

-Observation without recording
-File of children's work
-Interviews with parents
-Anecdotal notes.

They rarely or never use:

-Rating scales
-Case studies
-District-developed tests
-Readiness workbook exercises
-Commercially published tests.

The responding Kindergarten teachers indicated that recorded observations, and teacher-developed testing activities provided the most useful information.

12.10 In What Areas of Evaluation Do Kindergarten Teachers Wish Additional Training?

When Kindergarten teachers were asked to indicate in which evaluation technique they would like to have additional training, half of the teachers identified teacher-developed testing activities as their first or second choice. The next most popular techniques for additional training were anecdotal notes and commercially developed tests.

12.11 What Aspects of the Kindergarten Child's Development Are Evaluated?

The Kindergarten teachers were asked to rate the frequency with which they evaluated different aspects of a typical Kindergarten child's development (see Table 12.2).

TABLE 12.2

KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN CHARACTERISTICS EVALUATED
(Entries are percentages)

Characteristic	Frequency Characteristic is Evaluated. (Medians are underlined. Where the median is located approximately mid-way between two response categories, both entries are underlined.)						Kindergarten Teachers Identifying the Characteristic as Most Important (n = 900)
	Never	Less than 3 times a year	3 or 4 times a year	Monthly	Weekly	Daily	
Personal growth	0	2	16	17	<u>17</u>	<u>48</u>	54
Auditory discrimination	0	6	24	<u>22</u>	<u>28</u>	20	1
Small muscle control	0	1	12	19	<u>29</u>	39	0
Intellectual problem-solving	1	2	17	20	30	30	6
Social and emotional growth	0	1	10	14	18	<u>57</u>	20
Visual perception	0	2	16	20	<u>35</u>	27	3
Large muscle control	0	2	14	18	<u>36</u>	30	0
Knowledge and concepts	1	2	18	20	<u>30</u>	29	1
Language development	0	1	9	15	24	<u>51</u>	15

As shown in Table 12.2, teachers, on the average, evaluated the children on a weekly basis on all aspects listed. About half of the teachers identified the personal growth (a positive self-image, comfortable with self) of the children as the most important to be evaluated. One-fifth of the teachers identified social and emotional development, and about one-sixth of the teachers selected the characteristics labelled language development.

CHAPTER 13

WHAT PROVISIONS ARE NECESSARY FOR SPECIAL NEEDS CHILDREN IN KINDERGARTEN?

13.1 What Are the Issues in Special Education in Kindergarten?

There is a growing awareness of special needs children and their situation by teachers, administrators and parents. This awareness can be seen in the increased emphasis on early identification of special needs (see Chapter 12). However, as educators are quick to point out, the identification of children having special needs resulted in a dilemma. On the one hand, it is important to accurately identify the child's difficulties in order to formulate a plan to teach effectively and to provide the necessary resources for the child. On the other hand, there are the problems associated with placing the emphasis on the atypical characteristics of the child. One of these problems is the "labelling" of special needs children.

The concept of mainstreaming (i.e., integrating special needs children into the regular classroom for at least part of the day) has been "gaining increasing support" (Zeitlin, 1976, p.118). As with most educational concepts, there are different opinions and viewpoints; mainstreaming or integration of special needs children is no exception.

The effect of special needs children on the teaching-learning situation in the classroom has been a frequent topic in the educational literature. One interesting plan for dealing with the problem of increased teacher time and effort required by mainstreaming special needs children is the weighted class size plan.

The most well-known of such plans is the weighted pupil plan which was created in Lodi (California) Unified School District in 1975 and was adopted with modifications by the Denver Public School system. (A description of these weighted plans is presented in Chapter 10 of the General Report).

In this survey, special needs children were defined as "children whose individual needs significantly affect the teacher-learning situation."

13.2 What Types of Special Needs Children Do Kindergarten Teachers Encounter?

Last year, Kindergarten teachers and Preschool teachers most frequently encountered special needs children who had

emotional/behavioural problems, or speech problems. Both groups of teachers least frequently encountered children who were mentally handicapped. The largest groups of special needs children in single classrooms were English as a Second Language children and culturally different children.

Seven percent of the Preschool parents and Kindergarten parents reported that they had special needs children. The Kindergarten parents identified speech problems as the most common kind of special need. Preschool parents identified gifted as being the most common special need of their children.

13.3 How Much Teacher Time and Effort Are Needed for Special Needs Children?

Children with speech problems had been encountered by the greatest percent of Kindergarten teachers followed by encounters with children with emotional and behavioural problems and English as a second language. The teachers as a group had had the least amount of experience with visually impaired children.

The Kindergarten teachers, School and District administrators estimated that most special needs children are equivalent to between 1.5 and 2.5 average children in terms of teacher time and effort. These weightings are similar to those used in the Denver/Lodi plan (see Chapter 10, General Report). Children who were emotionally disordered or with severe behavioural problems were estimated to require between 2.5 and 3 times the teacher time and effort of an average child.

13.4 How Adequate are Kindergarten Teachers' Training and Experience in Special Needs?

When Kindergarten teachers were asked if they were able to identify children with special needs and effectively teach such children most indicated they could identify children who were emotionally disordered or with severe behavioural problems; and most indicated they could effectively teach gifted children. The fewest number of teachers reported being able to identify and effectively teach children who were hearing or visually impaired.

13.5 What Types of Professional Assistance in Special Needs Are Available?

The assistance by district/school personnel in special needs areas available to the Kindergarten teachers was rated as adequate by half or more of the teachers for half of the special needs areas. Assistance for the other half of the special needs was rated as inadequate or not available. Assistance in the special needs area of emotionally disordered or behavioural problems was rated inadequate by the greatest number of teachers. Assistance for the hearing impaired was rated the most adequate by the most teachers.

Information was also sought from Kindergarten teachers, School and District administrators on the availability of support services for parents of special needs children. Seventy-two percent of the districts had programs or support services for the parents of children with speech problems. This was the most common program or service for parents of special needs children reported by District administrators. The least common program was for the parents of gifted children. Across the special needs areas mentioned on the questionnaire, an average of thirty-nine percent of the Kindergarten teachers, fourteen percent of the School administrators and four percent of the District administrators did not know if programs for parents of special needs children were available.

The most available special class at both school and District level was for the mentally handicapped. This may be a reason teachers reported encountering the mentally handicapped children in the regular program least frequently. Classes for the gifted were the least available. They were reported in fewer than one-tenth of the schools and districts.

When asked if they had any intervention programs (i.e., special programs designed for "at risk" children) before Kindergarten entry between one-tenth and one-quarter of District administrators reported that such programs were available.

13.6 What Type of Program Is Recommended for the Gifted Child?

For Kindergarten children who could benefit from some kind of enriched or accelerated program, the Kindergarten teachers, School and District administrators all recommended they have enrichment as part of the regular Kindergarten program.

Seventy-six percent of the responding School administrators and sixty-six percent of the District administrators indicated that no acceleration/enrichment programs for Kindergarten were available in their school or district.

13.7 Should Special Needs Children Be Mainstreamed in Kindergarten?

A majority of Kindergarten (75%), Grade 1 (71%) and Preschool (69%) teachers, School (74%) and District (79%) administrators, Kindergarten (65%), Grade 1 (64%) and Preschool (71%) parents indicated that special needs children should be in the regular Kindergarten class part of the time. The written comments of respondents supporting mainstreaming for, at least, part of the time emphasized the need for trained aides supporting the special needs children in the regular program.

13.8 What is the Availability and Need for Support Services?

The professional literature dealing with the education of special needs children stresses the importance of support services in the development of a program to meet the needs of these children.

Figure 13.1 displays the availability of, and need for, support services as rated by the Kindergarten teachers. It shows that for most teachers the support services are obtainable when they are needed. School and District administrators agreed with Kindergarten teachers on the availability of support services.

FIGURE 13.1

NEED AND AVAILABILITY OF SERVICES FOR THE KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM
(Categorization based on median ratings by Kindergarten teachers)

		Availability				
		Not Available	Very difficult To obtain	Somewhat difficult to obtain	Not in school but easily available	Usually available in school
Need	Never or almost never needed	Art specialist	Audiologist	Hearing Therapist Psychologist E.S.L.teacher	District supervisors Music specialist P.E. specialist	
	Occasionally needed		Paid teacher aide		Speech therapist Counsellor School nurse Community resource people Volunteer teacher aide Resource centre staff Qualified substitute teachers	Learning Assistance Teacher Principals Older Pupils
	Frequently needed				Parents	

CHAPTER 14

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are based on the data, other information, and interpretations resulting from this needs assessment. Only the highlights of this information appear in this Summary Report. For a full background to the following conclusions and recommendations, the reader is urged to examine the General Report where the complete body of information from this assessment is to be found. As the Contract Team considers all of the recommendations important, they are not listed here in order of priority.

14.1 Kindergarten Curriculum

The major goal of the overall assessment was to provide direction to the Ministry of Education as it began the process of reviewing the Kindergarten curriculum. Of first importance was the issue of what models of the program were currently in place in B. C. Kindergartens. Three of these were identified in practice. The preferred model lies between the Cognitive-Discovery and Discovery Models (see description in Chapter 4). Nearly all Kindergarten teachers agree that the Kindergarten curriculum should be an integrated curriculum organized around activity centres. The teachers indicated that the Kindergarten guides should be updated and expanded. Written comments of Kindergarten teachers indicated they would like more guidance but not prescription.

1. *It is recommended, therefore, that the Kindergarten Curriculum Committee should:*

- *review the models identified and their use in B. C. Kindergartens;*
- *develop, as a result of this review, a curriculum guide that provides specific guidance without prescription. Such a guide would provide direction, continuity and similarity of programs provincially but would be flexible enough to meet the unique needs of individual children; and*
- *supplement the curriculum guide with resource information including suggestions for possible units and activities, book lists, recipes, and suggested formats for evaluation.*

More than four-fifths of the Kindergarten teachers responding indicated the need for a specific statement of the goals and purposes of Kindergarten. The written comments of teachers, administrators, and parents indicated that such a statement would be highly desirable.

2. It is recommended, therefore, that the Ministry of Education include a specific statement of goals and purposes of Kindergarten in the revised Curriculum Guide. This statement should be sufficiently specific so that Kindergarten teachers and administrators can articulate what Kindergarten is and what it is not and enable researchers to delineate the scope of future assessments accurately.

Many of the responding Kindergarten and Grade 1 teachers indicated that there had been an increase in emphasis in academic skills in Kindergarten as a result of the Grade 1 curriculum. This is not in agreement with their preferred model for Kindergarten.

3. It is recommended, therefore, that the Ministry of Education examine the Grade 1 curriculum and consider its relationship to the Kindergarten curriculum in order to develop one that assures continuity and a smooth transition for the children from one level to another.

There seems to be considerable controversy among teachers administrators and parents as to the place of reading in the Kindergarten curriculum. Kindergarten teachers want direction in this area but not prescription.

4. It is recommended, therefore, that the Ministry of Education:

- *include a comprehensive statement on reading/reading readiness in a revised Kindergarten Curriculum Guide that defines reading and reading/readiness, informal and formal approaches (with examples of each) and indicates their appropriateness for Kindergarten children;*
- *explain, in an introductory section, the integrated nature of the language arts;*
- *provide a scope and sequence for each area of the language arts at the Kindergarten level similar to one provided in the current curriculum guide, Elementary Language Arts (1978);*
- *share and discuss the statements described above with Kindergarten teachers, Grade 1 teachers, administrators, and parents.*

It is recommended further that District Personnel:

- *ensure that inservice opportunities are provided to promote discussion and a more thorough understanding of the meaning and implications of the statement.*

Nearly three-quarters of the responding Kindergarten teachers indicated that a statement on play should be included in the Curriculum Guide. Written comments indicated that some parents, Grade 1 teachers and administrators are not familiar with the role of play in Early Childhood Education.

5. It is recommended, therefore, that the Ministry of Education:

- *develop a specific statement on play and its role in Kindergarten, including the different types and purposes of play and its importance as a learning method of young children.*

It is recommended further that District Personnel:

- *ensure that this statement is shared and discussed with primary teachers, parents and administrators.*

The data indicate that more than half the children enrolling in Kindergarten in British Columbia have attended a Preschool program for at least a year. This trend of Preschool enrolment is expected to continue and increase in the future. Written comments of Kindergarten and Grade 1 parents, Preschool and Kindergarten teachers indicate that this previous experience is not always taken into consideration in some aspects of the Kindergarten program.

6. It is recommended, therefore, that the Ministry of Education consider the Preschool experience of many children prior to beginning Kindergarten in further developing a Kindergarten curriculum that is flexible enough to accommodate these children's needs throughout the year.

Further, in response to the desire expressed by a majority of Kindergarten and Preschool teachers, as well as administrators, it would be important to enable Kindergarten teachers to become more familiar with local Preschool programs.

7. It is recommended, therefore, that District and School Administrators:

- *plan and implement procedures whereby Kindergarten teachers and elementary school principals be given release time and other necessary support and encouragement to establish on-going communication with nursery schools, daycare centres, etc., in their area for the purpose of becoming more familiar with each other's programs; and*

- *initiate inservice activities to facilitate such communication.*

It is further recommended that the Ministry of Education:

- *include in a revised curriculum guide a statement on the importance of Kindergarten-Preschool communication; and*
- *provide suggestions in a resource book concerning the variety of ways such communication could be implemented.*

A majority of Kindergarten and Grade 1 teachers, School and District administrators agree that there is a need for increased communication and coordination between Kindergarten and Grade 1 teachers in order to promote an understanding by all teachers of the expectations upon them and to promote more effective transitions for children from one level to another.

8. It is recommended, therefore, that the District and Schools Administrators provide means and procedures necessary for Kindergarten and Grade 1 teachers to expand their communication beyond informal discussion to include other activities such as observation of each other's classes, conferences about the children and programs, and inservice on topics of common concern.

14.2 Admission to Kindergarten

The current School Act does not require compulsory school attendance until the age of seven years. In September 1979, 98.5% of all eligible Kindergarten aged children in B. C. were attending some type of Kindergarten. A majority of the responding Kindergarten and Grade 1 and Preschool parents think Kindergarten attendance should be compulsory. Almost half of the School and District administrators and Preschool teachers also agree.

9. It is recommended, therefore, that the Ministry of Education:

- *examine all aspects of the question of compulsory Kindergarten attendance, and*
- *make any policy changes as seem appropriate as a result of that examination.*

Some interest in twice-a-year entry was expressed by teachers, administrators and parents. Although twice-a-year entry is favoured by a majority of Preschool teachers and parents only, there is sufficient interest to warrant further investigation.

10. It is recommended, therefore, that the Ministry of Education:

investigate the feasibility of a pilot project that would examine the advantages and disadvantages of twice-a-year entry and, if feasible, initiate a pilot project with any district expressing interest in such a plan; and

make any policy changes as seem appropriate as a result of that project.

There is no definitive statistical evidence to support the use of chronological age to determine readiness for Kindergarten nor upon which to predict success at this level. Evidence about alternative criteria is equally lacking. Certainly several groups expressed interest in alternative admission procedures by indicating their dissatisfaction with the present arrangements.

11. It is recommended, therefore, that the Ministry of Education in cooperation with educational researchers:

- *investigate the ramifications of admission procedures for Kindergarten based on criteria other than chronological age; and*
- *provide, if the investigation so warrants, alternative procedures for admission.*

14.3 Funding and Facilities

At least 70% of the responding Kindergarten teachers, School and District administrators rated the current funding formula for Kindergarten used by the Ministry of Education as "somewhat inadequate" or "very inadequate". Kindergarten teachers rated some types of equipment and supplies as not present of insufficient. It is recognized that funding has direct implication for the establishment of effective programs. Sufficient materials and equipment are necessary requirements for effective curriculum implementation. Teachers and parents reported that some children living in rural areas, although eligible to attend Kindergarten, are not able to do so through a lack of transportation provided by the school district.

12. It is recommended, therefore, that the Ministry of Education:

- *examine the existing Kindergarten funding policy and practices in light of the current evidence in this report, and*
- *revise the 1/2 F.T.E. funding formula upward to more effectively match the needs of Kindergarten programs.*

It is further recommended, therefore, that each School District:

- *provide transportation to Kindergarten for all children eligible for Kindergarten; and*

- *supply each Kindergarten teacher with a special fund sufficient to meet those incidental expenses unique to the Kindergarten program.*

Various Early Childhood Education organizations recommend an area of 1200-1500 square feet (111 to 140 square meters) for the Kindergarten classroom. The current specification in British Columbia is 896 square feet. (The new draft of the School Building Manual (1980) specifies 80 square meters (360 square feet) with 34 square meters (366 square feet) of optional design space.) More than a quarter of responding Kindergarten teachers rated their present classroom size as poor or worse. With a program organized around activity centers and with dual class use, it is clear that Kindergarten classrooms can not be considered in the same way as other primary classrooms.

13. It is recommended, therefore, that the Ministry of Education set the size of the Kindergarten classroom for 20 children at a minimum of 1200 square feet (111 square meters) not including washrooms, cloakrooms, and storage areas.

Further it is suggested that, whenever possible, direct outside access from the Kindergarten room be provided. It is also suggested that future planning of Kindergarten classrooms include adequate storage space and electrical equipment of higher voltage necessary for the implementation of the Kindergarten curriculum.

Many of the responding Kindergarten teachers indicated a lack of sufficient materials and equipment of certain types (e.g., woodworking, large wheel toys, animal facilities, stoves, refrigerators, etc.). The majority of teachers wanted the sections of the Resource Book for Kindergartens on equipment and materials to be expanded.

14. It is recommended, therefore, that the Ministry of Education develop a suggested list of materials, supplies, and equipment for Kindergarten in sufficient detail to aid teachers and administrators in providing materials, supplies, and equipment necessary to the implementation of the Kindergarten curriculum.

Many Grade 1 teachers expressed a desire for Kindergarten type materials for the first part of Grade 1.

15. It is recommended, therefore, that each School District implement procedures to enable teachers and administrators to plan how sufficient materials of this type can be obtained and shared between Kindergarten and Grade 1.

14.4 Class Size and Organization

Kindergarten teachers, Kindergarten and Grade 1 parents indicated 15 to be considered by them as the ideal class size for Kindergarten. Written comments by Kindergarten and Grade 1 parents, administrators and teachers indicated class size to be a very common concern. The inadequate size of some Kindergarten classrooms also has implications for class size. Many Kindergarten teachers teach two sessions a day and must deal with more children and parents than other primary teachers do.

16. It is recommended, therefore, that the class size for Kindergartens be between 15 and 20 with the exact number dependent upon the needs of the children (e.g., special needs), the general resources, and the physical facilities available. Further, it is recommended that the class size should not exceed 20.

Most Kindergarten teachers have had special needs children in the Kindergarten and these teachers, School and District administrators indicated that such children require more teacher time, effort, and attention than typical children.

17. It is recommended, therefore, that the Ministry of Education develop guidelines for weighted enrolment to be implemented by each school district.

(One model which could be considered in developing such guidelines is the Denver/Lodi (California) Public School Systems' Weighted Pupil Plan).

More than three-quarters of the responding teachers and administrators favour transition classes between Kindergarten and Grade 1.

18. It is recommended, therefore, that all School Districts:

- *pursue the establishment of transition classes to meet the needs of the children who would benefit from such a program.*

It is further recommended that the Ministry of Education:

- *fund a longitudinal research study to investigate the effectiveness of transition classes.*

At least two-thirds of Kindergarten and Grade 1 teachers School administrators, and the parents of Kindergarten and grade 1 children oppose combining a Kindergarten class with primary grades on a full-time basis for non-educational reasons (e.g., low enrolment).

19. It is recommended, therefore, that each School District and School continue the practice of not combining Kindergarten with other grades. This would not include school organization based on a family grouping model nor the transition classes in Recommendation 18.

Over half the Kindergarten teachers who taught two Kindergarten sessions per day reported switching morning and afternoon classes part way through the year. When asked what they liked the least about their child's Kindergarten, many parents of Kindergarten and Grade 1 children cited attendance in afternoon sessions for the whole year.

20. It is recommended, therefore, that all School Districts:

- *implement a policy of alternating morning and afternoon classes halfway through the year where this policy does not cause hardship for the parents or children; and*
- *explain the advantages of such a procedure to parents when their child is enrolled in Kindergarten.*

14.5 Teacher Training and Qualifications

At least three-quarters of the responding teachers, parents and administrators think that special training in Early Childhood Education and experience with children ages 3 to 5 should be requirements for assignment to Kindergarten.

21. It is recommended, therefore, that all School Districts:

- *assign to Kindergarten classes only teachers with appropriate recent Early Childhood Education training and/or recent Early Childhood experience and inservice work;*
- *encourage and support professional development for those currently teaching Kindergarten; and*
- *continue to make every effort to recruit teachers for Kindergarten with appropriate qualifications.*

A large majority of Kindergarten teachers agreed that more inservice education specifically planned for Kindergarten is needed. These teachers indicated that additional training in the education of special needs children, evaluation, test development, observation skills, and practical ideas for the classroom should be given high priority.

22. It is recommended, therefore, that all School Districts:

- *plan future inservice opportunities after determining the professional backgrounds and perceived needs of the Kindergarten teachers; and*
- *communicate these needs to the universities.*

It is recommended further that the Universities:

- *provide opportunities for teachers in all parts of the province for inservice education (Credit and non-credit) in Early Childhood Education relevant to their expressed needs and in a mode easily accessible to them (e.g., Extension Department, Anik-B satellite, Knowledge Network, on-site courses).*

14.6 Parents

Recently, the Minister of Education has announced that regulations will be changed to allow school districts the option of setting up visitation programs. Home visits by the teacher and school visits by the parents and child are suggested optional components of this procedure.

Parents responding to the questionnaire indicated that home visits were their least-preferred form of parent-teacher contact. In addition, they indicated that they did not favour shortened sessions in September.

23. It is recommended, therefore, that School Personnel:

- *give parents the option of selecting home or school visits during this release time;*
- *explain the reasons for shortened sessions (if used) in relation to the Kindergarten program for the whole year; and*
- *respond to parents' concerns on these and other questions as part of the enrolment procedures prior to the children entering Kindergarten.*

More than three-quarters of the responding teachers, administrators and parents agree it is desirable for each school to plan and implement an educational program for parents of Preschool and Kindergarten children to expalin and discuss the Kindergarten program.

24. It is recommended, therefore, that School Districts:

- *fund and support educational programs for parents in each school enrolling Kindergarten students.*

It is further recommended that School Personnel in each school enrolling Kindergarten students:

- *use such a program to explain and discuss the Kindergarten program with parents, including the statement of goals and purposes (see Recommendaiton 2).*

Over 90% of responding teachers, administrators, and parents agreed that the Kindergarten teacher is in a unique position to establish early and continuing parent-teacher relationships. Parents indicated their willingness to be involved and their desire that this involvement continue through the grades. The two major obstacles to parent involvement and participation were parents who work and other children needing care at home.

A revised Curriculum Guide or Resource Book could provide Kindergarten teachers with suggestions for a variety of ways to involve parents in meaningful activities. Parents preferred types of involvement were those that brought them into direct contact with the children (e.g., helping children in small groups or 1-to-1 situations and field trips); clerical work and similar activities were not popular.

25. It is recommended, therefore, that District and School Personnel:

- *implement a variety of ways parent-teacher contact and involvement can be established and maintained; and*

- *examine programs in the province and elsewhere that have proved successful in continuing teacher-parent contact and involvement and which accommodate parents' varying circumstances and preferences.*

There was a high degree of unanimity among responding teachers, administrators, and parents that parenting/parent education should be made available to parents.

26. It is recommended, therefore, that the Ministry of Education perhaps in conjunction with the Ministries of Human Resources and Health provide parenting courses throughout the province. These courses could be delivered by a variety of means, including satellite transmission and distribution of video-tapes to schools and other interested organizations.

14.7 Screening

More than three-quarters of the teachers, administrators

and parents were in favour of the screening of Kindergarten children for the purpose of identifying special needs children, and for planning the Kindergarten programs and programs for individual children.

27. It is recommended, therefore, that the Ministry of Education establish further province-wide guidelines for use by school districts in planning and implementing screening procedures for all children before entry into Kindergarten or early in the school year. These guidelines should inlcude the requirements that:

- *information be collected about general health, vision hearing, speech and motor co-ordination;*
- *specialists, including the Kindergarten teacher, conduct this screening;*
- *districts provide any necessary follow-up indicated by screening procedures;*
- *information derived from screening be communicated both to teachers and to parents.*

14.8 Support Services

The Kindergarten teachers, School and District administrators estimated that most special needs children are equivalent to between 1.5 and 2.5 average children in terms of teacher time and effort. Children who were emotionally disordered or who had severe behavioural problems were estimated to require between 2.5 and 3 times the teacher time and effort of an average child.

28. It is recommended, therefore, that each School District:

- *ensure that Kindergarten teachers and children received, where necessary, the support services of Learning Assistance teachers, speech therapists, counsellors, etc.; and*
- *provide a qualified child care worker for any child who requires specialized attention beyond the capability of a classroom teacher when that child is placed in a regular Kindergarten classroom.*

14.9 Future Kindergarten Needs Assessments

Based on the experiences gained as a result of carrying out this assessment, the following recommendations are made concerning future Kindergarten Needs Assessments.

29. *It is recommended that the Ministry of Education:*

- *ensure that on-site observations in Kindergartens by trained observers take place, that these observations and other data-collection occur during the March-May period, that teachers be provided with the resources necessary to complete their part of the assessment in such a manner that it does not interfere with their other professional duties;*

- *that a timeline of at least eighteen months be arranged; and*

- *that a practising Preschool teacher and a Kindergarten/Grade 1 transition class teacher be included on the Advisory Committee.*

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